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I Am the LORD, Your Holy One, Isra'el's Creator, Your King **43: 8-21**

I am the LORD, you holy One, Isra'el's creator, your king DIG: Although Isra'el has been blind and deaf to the LORD in the past (42:18-20), what is the purpose for which He will lead them out of Babylon (44:10, and also see 41:20)? What will that act of deliverance communicate to the nations? With what attitude do you imagine this witness will be carried out? What contrasting attitudes has God found in the Babylonians, in the wild animals, and in Isra'el (43:14, 20 and 22)? With what attitude do you imagine the exiles carried out their religious practices (43:22-28)?

REFLECT: When has ADONAI worked to the good in your life despite your blindness and deafness? How would you explain to a non-believer what the LORD has done for you? What should be our motivation in witnessing to others of God's grace in our lives? When has God seemed like a dusty memory to you? At those times, what helps you get in touch with Him? How might recalling the acts of ADONAI in your past give you courage to face the present and future? What has God done in your past that you especially can look to as evidence of His presence with you? What "streams in the desert" are bubbling up for you now? What new thing has the LORD done in your life? What is He doing now? What former things from your past, in 43:18, do you have difficulty forgetting? How might 43:25 help?

ADONAI invited Isra'el, still spiritually **blind and deaf (42:20, 48:8)**, to be brought before **the nations**. **Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf (43:8)**. Imagine a litigant depending on **the blind** to testify on what **they** had seen and **the deaf** to what **they** had heard! So why can **Isra'el** serve as a witness? In spite of **Isra'el's blindness she** can testify that **God** predicted the events that will come to pass 150 years later. Even though **Isra'el** did not believe the prophecies at the time **they** were given, **they** must now testify that the prophecies were given and are in the process of being fulfilled.

God calls **the** Gentile **nations** to produce the strongest case for idolatry to see if **they** can

compare with what **ADONAI** has done. **All the nations gather and the peoples assemble (43:9a)**. In theory, **Isra'el** is supposed to be dependent upon **God**. In theory, **the nations** are supposed to be dependent upon **their** idols. But rather than being consistent and worshipping **her God** alone, **Isra'el** was prone (up to the point of the **Babylonian** captivity) to worship the **idols** of the Gentiles. Now, both are called before **God's** courtroom scene.

Here **God** calls upon **the nations** to produce **their** case concerning the validity of the worshiping of **idols**. **Which of them foretold this and proclaimed to us the things of the past (43:9b)**? It is obvious that **the idols** could not predict the future, so instead, **ADONAI** wanted **them** explain the significance of the things that have happened in the past in order to validate that **they** were indeed **gods**. **Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right, so that others may hear and say, "It is true" (43:9c)**. If **they** can do this, then idolatry would be valid. If idolatry is valid, then **Isra'el** would be justified in worshipping **the idols**. But if **they** were silent about both the past and the future, then **Isra'el** should turn away from **her** idolatry and worship **God** alone.

God then turned to **His people**, who perhaps thought **they** would merely be interested spectators at the trial, with the shocking realization that **He** would rest **His** claims of deity on **their** testimony. **"You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "and My Servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I Am He" (43:10a)**. The opening pronoun, **you**, emphasizes that **the Israelites**, and no one else, were to be **His witnesses**, and that point is highlighted when **He** said: **declares the LORD**. This was no casual, offhand statement, but a profound word directly from **ADONAI**. These three verbs **know, believe, and understand** detail the progress of faith, extending from initial experience of **the LORD** through dependence on **Him**, to an understanding of **His** nature and ways.¹⁶¹ So now **God** asks **Isra'el** to speak the word to **these** Gentile **nations** that have gathered whether **ADONAI** has prophesied or not.

The Jews are asked to be witnesses to three things: First, that **the LORD** is the only true **God**. **He** has no competitor or equal. **He** alone is **God**. **ADONAI** alone holds this unique position. **Before Me no god was formed, nor will there be one after Me (43:10b)**. Before **the gods** were made, **He** was, and after all **the gods** are gone, **He** will be. Consequently, what **Isra'el** is called to learn is that **ADONAI** is not merely great or loving, or just or powerful, but much more than that. **He** is the only **One** to whom all of creation must come to terms.

Secondly, of all the religions in the world only **the Messiah** guarantees salvation. **I, yes I,**

am ADONAI; besides Me there is no Savior, there is no Savior (43:11). Other religions assemble quite a program, but they certainly do not guarantee salvation. **The LORD** said: **Besides Me there is no M'falti** (*the Savior or Deliverer*). Free! Free indeed! Through **M'falti**, I am eternally released from the hands of my enemies, from all kinds of bondage, accusations, curses, and every sin that so easily entangles me. Then **God** brings up the subject of idolatry.

The truth of the previous verse is made clear here. In an allusion to the challenge of the gods, **God** declares that **He** alone had **revealed** the future and made it known. **I have revealed and saved and proclaimed - I, and not some foreign god among you. You are My witnesses**, declares **the LORD**, **that I Am God (43:12)**. Isra'el worshiped the god Bel, but Bel did not rescue **the Jews** from **Babylon**. Isra'el worshiped Ba'al, but Ba'al did not rescue **the Jews** from **Babylon**. Isra'el worshiped the Ashtoreth, but the Ashtoreth did not rescue **the Jews** from **Babylon**. Only one **Person** is going to **redeem the Jews** from **Babylon**, and that is **the One God of Isra'el**. So, **they** must now witness to the fact that **the LORD** is the only **Savior**, for all the other **gods the Jews** had been prone to worship had failed to redeem **them** from **Babylon**. It was as if **God** was saying, "As long as you will avoid idolatry and turn away from that will which will lead you away from **Me**, **I** will bless you."

Thirdly, no one can stop **God**. **Yes, and from ancient days I AM He. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it (43:13)?** From the first day of creation, **He** was the only **God** and whatever **He** chose to do, no other **god** could hinder. It was **God** who worked out the **Babylonian** captivity. And all the worship of the Bel, Ba'al, or the Ashtoreth could not save **the Jews** from it. So **Isra'el**, the **blind** witness, is called to worship. **God** asks: **When I act, who can reverse it?** The implied answer was, and is, of course, "No one!"

Yeshua quoted **43:10** when **He** said to **His disciples**: **You will be My witnesses** (**Acts 1:8**), and **He** was using the term in the same sense that **Isaiah** used it. **He** was calling on **His disciples** to give evidence from **their** own personal experience that **Jesus Christ** was who **He** said **He** was. **John** also did that (**1 Jn 1:1-3**). It is interesting that **God** does not command us to be **His witnesses**. **He** simply declares the fact: **you are My witnesses**.

Being a **witness** means that a person has a vital, first-hand experience of **Christ** that has transformed the way he or she lives. Like it or not, we have been changed. If this is not the case, there is nothing to **witness** to. That person is a **blind witness**, just like **Isra'el**, with no knowledge of **God** or **His** ways. This is demonstrated by **the sons of Sceva**, who were

evidently trying to minister out of a secondhand knowledge of **Messiah**. **Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding (Acts 19:14-16).**¹⁶² The only way to be an effective **witness** for **Jesus** is to have a personal relationship with **Him**. **We are** the evidence of the transforming power of **ADONAI**. Being witnesses is not something we *do*, it is something we *are*.

Then **Isaiah** revealed to **the Israelites** their deliverance from **Babylon** in 536 BC, a **near historical prophecy** given about 150 years beyond **Isaiah's** own day. **He** started out with a promise of the coming liberation. Three things should be noted here. First, **God** says that **He** is the only **Redeemer** that **Isra'el** will ever have. **This is what the LORD says - our Kinsman Redeemer (43:14a)**. **He** is both willing and able to **redeem** them (see my commentary on **Exodus**, to see link click [Bz](#) - **Redemption**).

Secondly, although **the people** had not fulfilled **their** obligations, **He** will buy **them** back at the cross; **He** is **the Kinsman Redeemer** (see my commentary on **Ruth** [Ax](#) - **Ruth and Boaz on the Threshing Floor**), and by position **He** is **the Holy One of Isra'el (43:14b)**. The same unique moral qualities that made **ADONAI** not **One** to be mocked in **Chapters 1-39**, make **Him** uniquely able to save those who call on **Him** in **Chapters 40-66**. Therefore, the two sections of the book complement each other on the nature and holiness of **God**. Yes, humanly speaking, it was **Cyrus** that overthrew **Babylon**. But it was actually **the LORD** working behind the scenes that had, in reality, liberated **the Israelites**. If **He** used human instruments, that was well and good, but it was **ADONAI** who was actually at work.



And thirdly, **ADONAI** spells out the judgment on **Babylon**. Why will these mighty events

occur? **For your sake I have sent** the Medes and the Persians **to Babylon** to destroy it. These two nations were consolidated under Cyrus the Great to bring about the fall of **the Babylonian** Empire. Thus, **the Babylonians** will become **fugitives** on their own **ships in which they took pride (43:14c)**. **They** learned how to navigate the Euphrates River down to the Persian Gulf. And since **they** were able to do the very thing the Assyrians before **them** were unable to do, **they** took great pride in this. But now **Isaiah** says that the very thing **in which they take pride** in will be **their** means of escape when **Babylon** is conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire lead by Cyrus.

Then **God** describes **Himself** as the **Holy One** who will judge **Babylon**, saying: **I Am the LORD, your Holy One, Isra'el's Creator, your King (43:15)**. **God** takes responsibility for bringing **Isra'el** into existence. Every anti-Semite should take note of this. **He** is **her King**. When **Yeshua Messiah** came to earth and made **His** claim to Kingship, the believing remnant knew **He** was claiming to be **Immanuel . . . God with us (Matthew 1:23)**. **Isaiah** prophesied that **the LORD** would judge **Babylon** because **she** mistreated **Isra'el** and **He** is **Isra'el's Creator, her King**.

ADONAI makes plain that the reason for the coming miraculous deliverance from **Babylon** was not because of *who the Israelites* were, but because of *whose they* are (see **43:10-13**). It was because **they** belong to **the LORD**, and because of what sort of **God He** is, that the end of the **Babylonian** Captivity was to come to an end. The four descriptions in **43:15** are a miniature TaNaKh theology. In short, **He** is **ADONAI** who revealed **Himself** at Mount Sinai (see my commentary on **Exodus Db - The Revelation at Mount Sinai**), **He** is **Holy One** who had called **the Israelites** to be holy because **I, the LORD, am holy and have set you apart from the nations to be My own (Leviticus 20:26)**, **He** is **Israel's Creator** who had called them into existence from nothing, **He** is their **King** whom **they** owe **their** complete allegiance.

Verses 16 and 17 give an unusually long introduction to **verse 18**. The introduction is made up of a series of statements identifying **ADONAI** as the speaker by **His** actions. This kind of introduction is common in **Chapters 40** through **45**. Its purpose is to establish both the context and credibility of the surprising announcement of **the new thing** in **43:18-21**.

Then **Isaiah** presents a contrast between **the former thing**, or old deliverance and **the new thing**, or **the new** deliverance. **This is what the LORD says - He who made a way through the Sea of Reeds, a path through the mighty waters (43:16)**. Here **Isaiah** alludes to the parting of the waters in **the Sea of Reeds** by which the Jews crossed away from Egypt. The old deliverance concerns **the Exodus**; **the new** deliverance concerns the

return from **Babylon** in 536 BC. First, look at the old deliverance. Then **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** alludes to the destruction of the Egyptian army. **Who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick (43:17).** This is military terminology illustrating how a general commands. **ADONAI**, not Pharaoh, was the commander of the Egyptian army and **He drew them out** to destruction, never to be seen again.

But then **He** announced a **new** deliverance, which was deliverance from **Babylon**. **Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past (43:18).** **God** calls upon **Isra'el** to no longer concentrate on the miracles of the old deliverance of the **Exodus**, but to concentrate on the miracles of the **new** deliverance, the return from **Babylon**. For **Isra'el**, the glorious saving event of the past had become a straitjacket into which every other act of **God** was forced. As a result, **the Israelites** were frequently unable to recognize **the LORD's** new actions when **they** came. **He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him (John 1:11).** It was as if **Isaiah** was saying, "Remember, **ADONAI** has done many things, but do not limit the way **He** did them. Why? Because **He** is **the Creator**. **He** does not need to do things the same way twice. Of course, **He** is consistent, but **His** methods can always be **new**. If we make an **idol** of **His** methods, we might miss **His** blessings." The past can teach and illustrate but it must not bind. **The LORD** always has greater things in store for us; **He** is revealed in the past; however, **He** is always more than the past has revealed.

The former things were those events that had already been predicted and fulfilled in the past (**41:22, 42:9, 43:9, 46:9, 48:3**); here, clearly the exodus. **God** was predicting a new exodus that should not be made to conform to the previous one but allowed to stand on its own. So, then **He** announces: **See, I am doing a new thing** and promises to prosper the way home. **Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland (42:19).** Looking with eyes of faith, **the new thing** seems to be exploding right before **the prophet's** very eyes. Like **the blindness** of their imminent judgment, **Isaiah** is amazed that **the Israelites** do not recognize it.

There is a song entitled, "Give Me That Old Time Religion." And in the song it says, "It was good for the Hebrew children, and it is good enough for me." But it wasn't good enough for the Hebrew children. The faith of Abraham was not adequate for them; **ADONAI** had something more. **The LORD** had to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt and show them something new. The Red Sea would part, Mount Sinai would explode with fire and with the voice of **God**. Commandments would be given and there would be new lessons learned in the wilderness. The song says, "It was good for Paul and Silas." The truth is that the old-

time religion was not good enough for Paul and Silas. For years Paul wanted it to be good enough, until he met **Jesus** on the road to Damascus. He wanted to keep the old wineskin of Jewish tradition, but **Yeshua** was bursting the seams of that wineskin. New wine had come and new wineskins were called for. You can't have the old-time religion. Your mother's faith will not do, it has to be your faith. Your father's faith is not adequate, you have to have your own experience with **the LORD**. In fact, your faith, the faith used to get you by several years ago, will not do for today. If your faith has not grown since you first met **Christ** as a kid, the wineskin has dried and become brittle. It will not do for the new thing that **God** wants to do in you today. You can't remain static. You can't stay where you are. Yesterday's experience will not do for today. Your faith must be current. In **43:18-19**, **ADONAI** says: **Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.**

In the process of returning from **Babylon**, **God** will again perform miracles, such as providing **water in the desert and streams in the wasteland to give drink to My people, My chosen (43:20)**. Earlier, **Isaiah** had said that when **the Messiah** came there would be a spiritual refreshing. It would be like **water gushing forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert (35:6b)**. **The Messiah** could not be born in **Babylon**, **He** was to be born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**). The return of **the exiles** to **Isra'el** would be, in a sense, a spiritual refreshing because it would be from there that **Christ** would come.

It is perhaps hard for us to fully appreciate what a frightening prospect this journey must have been to those who faced it. First, it was across unknown territory. Most of those who were young and fit enough to travel would have been born in the exile, and although **Babylon** was not their true home it would have been the only place **they** knew. The wilderness represented a break with even that limited security. Secondly, Jerusalem was a long way off, between 500 and 900 miles, depending on the route. **The returnees** could expect to be traveling for at least four months through harsh terrain, in which they would be vulnerable not only to exhaustion but also to attack by bandits. The wilderness meant hardship and danger. And what could **they** expect on arrival? A reception with open arms? A land flowing with milk and honey? No. **They** would arrive to see a devastated land, and would face the difficult task of rebuilding **their** lives from scratch. In a different way the wilderness was just as frightening as captivity in **Babylon**.¹⁶³ How would they make it? How would **they** survive? As we shall see next, it would only happen for **them** the way it only happens for us. The grace of **God** is, in reality, the only thing that can carry us through.

Isaiah saw the purpose of **the nation** and why **the Messianic people** were formed. **God**

says **the people were formed for Myself, that they may proclaim My praise (43:21). The Israelites** were created, **formed**, and chosen to be **ADONAI's witnesses (43:10, 44:8)**, and this continues to be the function of **His** people today. Paul tells us: **For you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light (First Peter 2:9).** We have been **formed** to worship **Him. The potter and the clay motif (Isaiah 41:24-26; Jeremiah 19:1-3; Romans 9:20-22)** reminds us that we can face the troubles of life with confidence - even when, as here, we are the causes of our own misfortune by rebellion and disobedience. The pressures of life are the loving touches of **the Potter's** hand as **He** perfects what **He** has planned.