

Review

In chapter 42, God promised to return to earth as a warrior, judging those who had followed after false gods. He had also rebuked the Jews for their willing blindness, and asked that even after He delivered them, would they even listen to Him?

43:1 Do Not Fear

God reminds the Jews that He created them. That He knows them. That they are His, for He has redeemed them. With all these truths in mind, they are told not to fear, even in view of the Babyonian Captivity they would be facing in another hundred years.

As Christians, we need to be reminded of these very truths as well, and for the same reason: fear in this life. Often, we get into a panic because things in life seem to be disastrous, and that the difficult situation we're in will never end. That God isn't paying attention, or - worse yet - that He knows, but doesn't care.

So let's remind ourselves: God is our Creator. He knows us - and He loves us! In spite of our sin, He redeemed us to prove His love for us:

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God created us for a purpose. He redeemed us because He has a good plan for our lives. So don't be afraid of your present, because both it and your future are in God's hands.

43:2-7 Past Deliverance, Future Deliverance

The Lord tells the Jews that He is with them - they don't need to fear. And He gives them promises which would certainly bring their past to mind:

- When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea,

Ex. 14:22 The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

- When they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land,

Josh. 3:16 the waters which were flowing down from above

stood and rose up in one heap... So the people crossed opposite Jericho. And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

- When Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were thrown into the fire furnace

Dan. 3:27 ...the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.

God had established that He was with them. Even when they're sent away to captivity, God will bring them back from Babylon.

I want you to notice something for your own life: There will be trials. After all, God says "when" in these verses, not "if." So God does not always prevent the army from coming after you. He won't always save you from being thrown into the fiery furnace. He won't always deliver you FROM the trial, but if He doesn't, you're guaranteed that He'll deliver you THROUGH the trial.

43:8-9 Present Their Witnesses

Blindness had been mentioned quite a bit in chapter 42. Part of the ministry of Jesus Christ ("My Servant," as the Lord called Him), would be to open blind eyes. The Jews were described as blind because they had willingly closed their eyes to God's commands. Now, God refers to the blind nations, who have put their trust in idols that cannot see.

God's speech is quite clever: "Bring out the blind people so they can testify to what they've seen!" This is a continuation of the courtroom scene that started back in chapter 41, where God challenged the idols to prove their deity by accurately predicting the future. Since they couldn't say anything at all, now God is calling together the nations and those Jews who have fallen into the blindness of idolatry. "Somebody, anybody, present your case," God is saying. "Either justify your trust in these false

gods, or believe Me"

43:10-13 There Is No Savior Besides Me

God asserts that He is the only God. There was no god formed before Him. And there will never be another after Him. That really messes up the Mormon's theology, by the way. They're working so hard to become gods, but there will never be another god after the true God.

There is also no Savior besides the true God. That deals with the Jehovah's Witnesses, who proclaim that Jesus is the Savior, but that He's not God.

But notice, this is the Lord saying, "There is no Savior besides Me." If Jesus isn't God, then how can they explain Bible verses like:

John 4:42 " ...we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

Acts 13:23 "...God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus"

Jesus is the Savior, and God says that there is no Savior besides Him. The only logical solution to that puzzle is if we are...

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus

43:14-17 Your Redeemer

Although it is inevitable that the Israelites will be taken captive to Babylon, God tells them that He is their Redeemer, and that Babylon will be judged. God is called the Redeemer 13 times in Isaiah, and it speaks of Him as the one who pays ransom, or buys out of bondage.

43:18-21 I Will Do Something New

God promises to do something new, and says, "Forget about the past." If the Jews look to their own past behavior, they will feel condemned and worthless. But God says, "Don't ponder that stuff. I'm going to do something new with you."

Most of us can feel pretty defeated when we dwell on our past failures. I can beat myself up terribly when I dwell on my historical mistakes. But God loves you and He loves me. He wants us to move on to-

wards a better future.

Some people are afraid of the future God has for them. If the Jews held captive in Babylon stay in the past, they will never be returned to the Promised Land. So too, we need to not be afraid of the new things God will do in our lives. Because even if there are hundreds of miles of wilderness between the present and the future, God will make a way, and He'll provide along the way.

So, let's follow the example of Paul:

Phil. 3:13-14 ...one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

43:22-28 Weary Of Me

The Jews had become weary of God. It was a burden to obey His commandments, and offer sacrifices. Maybe you can relate to their feelings - it's not always easy to walk God's way. But the times we feel that way aren't the Lord's fault. They speak more about our hearts than His orders. John wrote,

1John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

And Jesus said,

Matt. 11:28-30 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

So, if it's a burden, it's not the Lord's yoke you're carrying. Because if we're loving God, it's not hard to do the commandments.

On the other side of the equation, God says that our unrepentant sins are a burden to Him. To relieve His burden and ours, we just need to call on Him. He will erase our transgressions.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous

to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

44:1-5 Do Not Fear

The Jews have messed up, but God still loves them. Just because He needs to judge them doesn't mean that His good plans for them have changed. They are His people, so He gives them promises that they can hang on to.

Are you one of God's people? If so, your past failures have not affected God's love for you. He's just waiting for you to turn back to Him and put yourself in a place where He can shower His blessings on you once again.