

A Trek Through Isaiah 33 - 41:1-20

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<u>The Great Solution (40:1 - 42:17)</u>	
Consolation for Yahweh's people 40:1 - 41:20	The plight of the Gentiles 41:21-29
The Servant 42:1-17	

This section: Consolation for Yahweh's people 40:1 - 41:20

- Two questions from the exiles
 - Does Yahweh want to rescue us, or has He given up on us because of our sin?
 - 40:1-11 He wants to rescue you so you can proclaim Him to the world.
 - Can Yahweh rescue us, or is He just a local deity to be defeated by those more powerful?
 - 40:12 - 41:7 He can. He is the Creator and the Lord of history.
- Structure
 - Three voices of comfort 40:1-11
 - Guaranteed by God as Creator 40:12-31
 - Guaranteed by God as the Lord of history 41:1-7
 - Three pictures of consolation 41:8-20

Today: the last two parts

Guaranteed by God as the Lord of history 41:1-7

Call to hear. 41:1

Isaiah 41:1 (LSB): "Coastlands, listen to Me in silence, And let the peoples gain new power; Let them come forward, then let them speak; Let us draw near together for judgment.

- V1 Coastlands, listen to Me in silence
 - Yahweh commands all nations to be silent and listen
- V1 And let the peoples gain new power; Let them come forward, then let them speak
 - Gird themselves, come to hear, respond
 - As Yahweh challenged Job in Job 38:3 "Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you make Me know!
- V1 Let us draw near together for judgment.
 - Yahweh will present His case, the nations will respond.

Case presented 41:2-4

Isaiah 41:2–4 (LSB): “Who has awakened one from the east Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet? He gives up nations before him And has dominion over kings. He makes them like dust with his sword, As the wind-driven chaff with his bow.

3 “He pursues them, passing on in peace, By a way he had not come with his feet.

4 “Who has worked and done it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? ‘I, Yahweh, am the first; and with the last, I am He.’”

- Yahweh’s case is based on His actions in history.
- Isaiah presents it in two questions
- V2-3 Question 1
 - Who has awakened one from the east Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet?
 - One from the east.
 - An unnamed conqueror. To illustrate a principle.
 - Later will name him as Cyrus.
 - awakened.
 - Incited to act.
 - Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet
 - Summoned as a servant to accomplish a righteous purpose
 - He gives up nations before him, and has dominion over kings.
 - He. The One who summons.
 - Him. The one summoned.
 - Gives up nations before him. The one summoned will conquer nations and rule them.
 - He makes them like dust with his sword, As the wind-driven chaff with his bow. He pursues them, passing on in peace, By a way he had not come with his feet.
 - How the purpose will be accomplished
 - He. The one summoned
 - He will pursue but not be attacked
 - He will move so swiftly that his feet do not seem to touch the ground.
- V4a Question 2
 - Who has worked and done it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning?
 - Who has worked and done it?
 - Restating the question.
 - Calling forth the generations from the beginning
 - Expanding the scope: Not only calling one from the east but orchestrating all of human history.
- V4b Answer
 - ‘I, Yahweh, am the first; and with the last, I am He.’
 - the first, and with the last;
 - Eternal and unchanging over all history.
 - I am He. As Ex 3:14 I AM
- Any nation that has a God like this has nothing to fear, even in exile!

The futile response of unbelief 41:5-7

Isaiah 41:5–7 (LSB): The coastlands have seen and are afraid; The ends of the earth tremble; They have drawn near and have come.

6 Each one helps his neighbor And says to his brother, “Be strong!”

7 So the craftsman strengthens the smelter, And he who smooths metal with the hammer strengthens him who beats the anvil, Saying of the soldering, “It is good”; And he strengthens it with nails, So that it will not be shaken.

- V5 The fear of unbelief
 - The coastlands have seen
 - All the unbelieving nations
 - are afraid...tremble
 - Of yet another conqueror
 - Drawn near and have come
 - Not to Yahweh. Together with each other.
 - Typical response of unbelief: To hide from Yahweh
 - As A&E in the garden in Gen 3:9-10: Yahweh God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”
 - Knew in their conscience that they had sinned
 - Afraid because their sin was uncovered before Yahweh.
- V6 self-help
 - Each one helps his neighbor And says to his brother, “Be strong!”
 - Seeking strength in each other
 - No repentance and turning to God
 - As the Arabian tribes in Is 21:13-14
- V7 idolatry
 - Doubling down on idolatry to strengthen their gods.
 - Note the absurdity
 - The idol is validated by men.
 - The idol must be strengthened by men.
 - As the silversmiths rioting in Ephesus in Acts 19:27-28: (Demetrius said), “And not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be considered as worthless and that she, whom all of Asia and the world worship, is even about to be brought down from her majesty.” When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”
 - The goddess could lose her majesty if men did not uphold her.
 - Her followers rioted for two hours. Shouting to make her great.
 - Typical behavior for one worshipping an idol.

- Who rules history? Isaiah says Yahweh is Lord of history
 - If Isaiah is wrong and Yahweh is just another god then strengthening their gods makes perfect sense.
 - If Isaiah is correct then the only thing to do is repent and worship Him.

Three pictures of consolation 41:8-20

- Helplessness transformed through divine action.
 - V8-13 Victory for the lowly
 - V14-16 Transformation for the negligible
 - V17-20 Provision for the needy
- So faith is eminently practical in a world of superior hostile powers (v8-13), colossal difficulties (v14-16), adverse circumstances (v17-20)

Victory for the lowly. 41:8-13

Isaiah 41:8–13 (LSB)

8“But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Seed of Abraham My friend,

9You whom I have strongly taken hold of 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.

10‘Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will make you
mighty, surely I will help you; Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’

11“Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; Those who contend with
you will be as nothing and will perish.

12“You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them, Those who war with you will be as
nothing and non-existent.

13“For I am Yahweh your God, who strongly takes hold of your right hand, Who says to you, ‘Do not fear,
I will help you.’

- V8-9 Israel My servant
 - V8a - 9b Inclusio about status. Servant. Chosen.
 - But you,
 - Contrast with the unbelieving nations v5-7
 - You. Singular. Personifying the nation.
 - Israel...Jacob
 - Noting their origin
 - My servant...whom I have chosen
 - (1) In the position of serving the Lord. (2) by divine choice.
 - First appearance of the “servant”, focus of ch 40-55
 - A lesson for the nation
 - Judah was behaving as if she was sovereign, in charge of her own destiny, acting for her own purposes.
 - A harmful attitude:
 - Would destroy the theocracy
 - Would remove the promise of salvation for the world
 - Judah must learn
 - She is the servant of her covenant and electing God.
 - She must be rescued from the bondage of sin
 - God’s means
 - The exile: discipline under God’s wrath
 - The greater Servant: redemption and reconciliation

- Comfort
 - (1) My servant 2x (2) Seed of Abraham My friend, You whom I have strongly taken hold of from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts
 - Structure A-B-A-B
 - A: strongly taken hold of
 - B: From the ends of the earth
 - A: Called
 - B: From its remotest parts
 - Resolute action on God's part.
 - strongly taken hold of. To grasp; to seize. Efficacious choice.
 - Called. To call; to shout; to name; to appoint; to summon. Efficacious calling
 - Based on their relationship
 - Seed of Abraham My friend
 - Emphasizing the relationship
 - Recalling their history
 - Ends of the earth...remotest parts
 - Re the call of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees.
 - Written from Palestinian viewpoint
 - I have chosen you and not rejected you
 - God is the covenant-keeping God
- v10-13 Fear not
 - Inclusio v10 & 13 Do not fear
 - V10 Encouragement
 - Do not fear...Do not look anxiously about you
 - Fear. The temptation
 - for I am with you...For I am your God.
 - Why they are not to fear: the God of v4 is with them and is their God.
 - In the exile, they are to meet fear with faith. As Ge 15:1 Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you...
 - Contrast with the nations in v5
 - Both see God's works
 - The nations fear
 - God's people are to be encouraged
 - I will make you mighty, surely I will help you; Surely I will uphold you...
 - God not passive but active: to strengthen, to help, to uphold
 - Surely...surely. Piling up the verbs.
 - Will. Perfect tense. As needed.
 - with my righteous right hand.
 - Right action.
 - For Israel: blessing from God's grace
 - For the nations: punitive justice for their wickedness

- V11-12 Victory in conflict
 - All
 - Enemies in general.
 - those who are angered at you ...who contend with you ...who quarrel with you, ... who war with you
 - Ascending progression of hostility
 - shamed;
 - Put to shame. When they realize their true condition before God.
 - Dishonored
 - When they receive no help from their idols.
 - Will be as nothing and will perish ... will not find them ... will be as nothing and non-existent
 - The outcome of the hostility
 - Increasing progression of destruction
- V13 The basis of true security
 - “For I am Yahweh your God, who strongly takes hold of your right hand,
 - Parallel with v10
 - Picture of a father with his left hand holding his child’s right hand to keep him from stumbling, while with his right hand defeating the enemies.
 - Who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’
 - True security rests upon the character of God

Transformation for the negligible 41:14-16

Isaiah 41:14–16 (LSB)

14“Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,” declares Yahweh, “and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

15“Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; You will thresh the mountains and pulverize them, And will make the hills like chaff.

16“ You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, And the storm will scatter them; But you will rejoice in Yahweh; You will boast in the Holy One of Israel.

- Structure
 - V14, 16b From fear to rejoice, boast
 - Inclusions:
 - Do not fear ... rejoice
 - The Holy One of Israel
 - V15-16a Israel's victory
 - Picture of a worm facing mountains
 - Picture from harvest (threshing and winnowing): the mountains are crushed into chaff and blown away
- V14 encouragement
 - Do not fear. Encouragement.
 - you worm Jacob, you men of Israel
 - Small and weak
 - I will help you, declares Yahweh
 - Personal divine action
 - your Redeemer
 - Two meanings
 - Toward the oppressed: A kinsman-redeemer who takes upon himself the debts of a helpless relative.
 - Toward the oppressor: An avenger of blood whose duty it was to execute the murderer of his relative.
 - The Holy One of Israel
 - Demonstrating His holiness in His ability and willingness to redeem His people.

- V15-16a Victory
 - I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges;
 - Threshing sledge: Heavy plank with sharp teeth pulled over grain stalks to crush them.
 - God transforming His people for the work
 - You will thresh the mountains and pulverize them, And will make the hills like chaff. You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, And the storm will scatter them.
 - Two metaphors
 - Threshing and winnowing to crush the grain stalks and remove the chaff
 - Mountains...hills. Israel's foes who towered over her.
 - pulverize...make like chaff. Complete victory.
 - You will thresh...you will winnow. In the power of God.
 - The storm will scatter them. The enemies are no more.
- V16b Rejoicing
 - But you will rejoice in Yahweh; You will boast in the Holy One of Israel
 - Yahweh's part: To gain the victory
 - The people's part: to enter into the joy.
 - Joy contrasted with the current trials and suffering.
 - boast in the Holy One of Israel . No worth in them.

Provision for the poor and needy 41:17-20

Isaiah 41:17–20 (LSB)

17“**The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, And their tongue is parched with thirst; I, Yahweh, will answer them Myself, As the God of Israel I will not forsake them.**

18“**I will open rivers on the bare heights And springs in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water And the dry land fountains of water.**

19“**I will put the cedar in the wilderness, The acacia and the myrtle and the olive tree; I will place the juniper in the desert Together with the box tree and the cypress,**

20**That they may see and know, And establish and gain insight as well, That the hand of Yahweh has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it.**

- Structure
 - V17,20 inclusio about personal care by their God
 - I, Yahweh, will answer them Myself...They may see and know that the hand of Yahweh has done this
 - V18-19 The wilderness blossoms
- V17 Rescued in the wilderness
 - The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, And their tongue is parched with thirst
 - Figurative picture from Israel’s wilderness experience in Ex 15-17
 - Afflicted: down-trodden, crushed under life’s burdens
 - Needy: bending before life’s forces
 - Cannot save themselves.
 - I, Yahweh, will answer them Myself, As the God of Israel I will not forsake them
 - I...Myself. For emphasis. I 6x in this passage
 - Yahweh. Personal name.
 - The God of Israel. In covenant with His people.
- V18-19 The wilderness blossoms
 - Figurative picture of wilderness into garden: complete transformation of Israel’s situation
 - Reversal of the curse of Gen 3.
 - Seven types of trees: completeness.
 - All trees are from Palestine, not Mesopotamia. Shows the location of the author.

- V20 Why Yahweh saves His people
 - They.
 - The believing remnant (the poor and needy of v17). They are reassured about their God.
 - The whole world. They come to understand the truth about Yahweh through His treatment of His people Israel.
 - Progression of understanding
 - See. Perceive
 - Know. Know as true.
 - Establish. Meditate upon.
 - Gain insight. Come to the true meaning
 - That the hand of Yahweh has done this
 - Yahweh. Israel's covenant-keeping God
 - He has acted to transform His people and their situation
 - As He said He would.
 - And the Holy One of Israel has created it.
 - Holy One of Israel. Apart from creation; separate from evil.
 - Created. As Gen 1:1
 - Edwards' cycle of beauty
 - God out of chaos creates plenty and order and beauty
 - Man sees God's work and understands that it is His, glorifies Him as the Creator, celebrates Him (v16)

Application: Our Ebenezer

Is 41:20 That they may see and know, And establish and gain insight as well, That the hand of Yahweh has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it.

- They: Us (the remnant of today)
- See...know...establish...gain insight. Come to full knowledge. As Eph 4:13 ...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ,
- That the hand of Yahweh has done this. Acting
- And the Holy One of Israel has created it. Creating

Look at 1 Sam 7

- Previously: The Philistines had captured the ark, but returned it after being afflicted by Yahweh.
 - 7:2 The ark has been at Kiriath-Jearim twenty years. Israel laments after Yahweh.
 - 7:3-6 Samuel challenges Israel: if they want to serve Yahweh they must put away their foreign gods. Israel obeys and serves Yahweh only. Samuel gathers them at Mizpah for prayer and confession of sin.
 - 7:7 The Philistines hear that Israel is gathered at Mizpah. They come to attack.
 - 7:8-11 Samuel prays and Yahweh answers. He thunders against the Philistines. The men of Israel pursue and strike them down and win a great victory.
 - 7:12 Samuel sets up a memorial
 - Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and he named it Ebenezer.
 - Lit the stone of help
 - For remembrance
 - And he said, "Thus far Yahweh has helped us."
 - As Is 41:20 That they may see and know, And establish and gain insight as well, That the hand of Yahweh has done this
 - Comfort for Israel: Yahweh showed that He had not given up on them and that He was able to deliver them.
 - 7:13-14 Results of the victory
 - The Philistines were subdued. No more invasions, territory and cities that they had captured were restored to Israel
 - Peace between Israel and the Amorites (on the east)
 - Again like Is 41:20: Through Yahweh's treatment of His people both the Philistines and the Amorites come to understand more of who He is
 - Note Israel's preparation for service
 - They had lamented after Yahweh (7:2)
 - When challenged, they removed their foreign gods (7:4)
 - They confessed their sin (7:6).
- They were ready
- To receive Yahweh's comfort
 - To be His witness to the nations.

Questions for us

- Are we prepared to serve our Lord? Have we lamented after Him? Have we put away what we have worshiped rather than Him? Have we confessed our false worship to Him?
- When our Lord brings a victory, do we see and know and establish and gain insight that He has done it? Do we receive the comfort He is giving? Do we see that we are a witness to those around us?
- Do we remember these things for the next time?

References

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