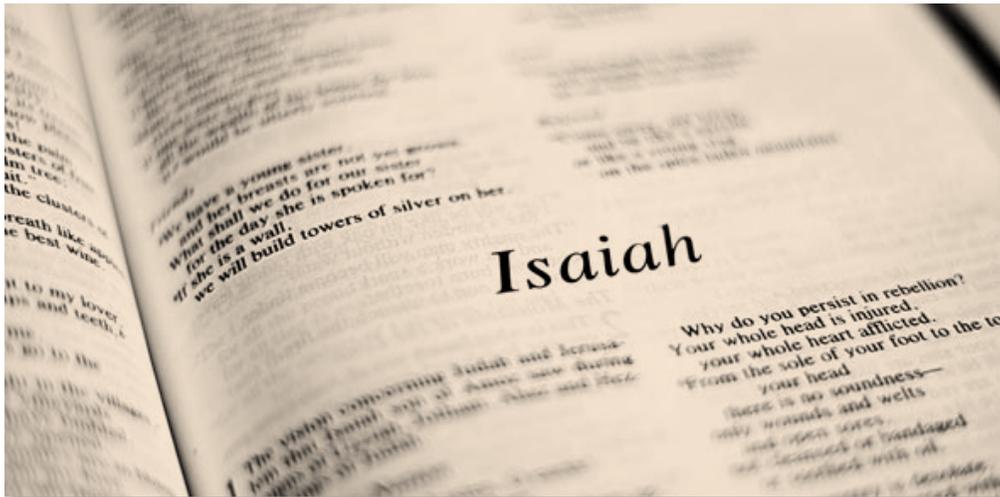


THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

THE COMING SERVANT, PART I: ISAIAH 42, 43



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Coming Servant, Part 1: Isaiah 42, 43
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Introduction to *Isaiah 42, 43*

God keeps pointing His people to Himself and the promise of restoration, which will come with His Servant/Messenger, and a new covenant. At that time, God will gain victory over all His foes, and He will bring a new world into being.

But will the people of God hear? Will they hold fast to His promises, as their time of trial approaches? They should remember that it was their failure to hear Him that has brought on His judgment. Now they should cling to His Word so that they can know and believe that He is their Redeemer.

This section is the first of several parts which point to the coming Servant/Redeemer. God's purpose is to encourage His people with the promise of redemption, forgiveness, and return to Him. But they must believe.

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1 A New Covenant for God's People

Pray Psalm 126.4.

Bring back our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.

Read Isaiah 42.1-9.

Reflect.

1. How does God describe the Servant Whom He is sending? What will be the effects of His coming?
2. To what does God point to encourage His people to believe in the coming Servant?

Meditate.

The people of God have proven one thing through their disobedience: They cannot save themselves. They have failed the covenant God made with Abraham, and which He renewed and extended with Moses and David (cf. Jer. 31.31, 32). God will make a new covenant with His people, and this covenant will be embodied by His Spirit-filled Servant (v. 1), Who will bring justice and righteousness to the world (vv. 1, 4, 6).

The promise is astounding. Even the Gentiles will be embraced in the Servant's work (v. 1), and the weak and poor (v. 3). His work will go largely unnoticed in His day (v. 2), but when it is finished, justice will flourish on earth, and even the distant coastlands will "wait for His law" (v. 4). The new covenant God is bringing in through His Servant does not negate the Law, which Israel has chronically disobeyed; it establishes it for all nations (Rom. 3.31).

God reminds the people of His credentials: He is Creator and Sovereign over all things (v. 5). He gives life and breath to every person (v. 5). He will be with His Servant as He comes to redeem the people of Israel and the Gentiles, so that He will not fail in His task (vv. 6, 4). He will bring healing and light and freedom and glory to the world, unlike the false deities Israel banked on for so long (vv. 7-9).

"Remember what I have done, based on what I have spoken," says the Lord (v. 9). "And now I am telling you new things, before they come to pass." He wants His people to believe His Word, rejoicing in His promises, and preparing through obedience to endure judgment with a view to the coming Servant and His redemptive work.

Remember. Believe. Obey. Hope. Here's a formula for God's people to embrace in every age.

Prepare.

1. The Servant will bring justice and righteousness (the Law, v. 4) to the world. How does He do that?
2. God points to the creation to confirm the reliability of His promises (v. 5). Does He still do that today? Explain.
3. God calls His people to "look back" and "look ahead" so that, as they "look around" at their times, they may have proper perspective for their lives. How does that work for believers today?

Moses received it, but they were not worthy. But how did we receive it? Learn! Moses received it as a servant, but the Lord himself gave it to us, that we might become the people of inheritance, by suffering for us. And he was made manifest in order that they might fill out the measure of their sins and we might receive the covenant through the Lord Jesus who inherited it, who was

The Coming Servant, Part 1: Isaiah 42, 43

prepared for this purpose, in order that by appearing in person and redeeming from the darkness our hearts, which had already been paid over to death and given over to the lawlessness of error, he might establish a covenant in us by his word. Letter of Barnabas (ca. 130 AD), *Letter of Barnabas 14.4-7*

Lord, You have sent Jesus, Your Servant, that I might be free from sin to serve You in righteousness. Help me today to...

Pray Psalm 126.

What vision of *restoration* do you hold in mind, as you seek the Lord and go forth to sow for Him each day?

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 126 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.

Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said, “The Lord has done great things for them!”

Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.

All they with tears of joy shall sing who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow, and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav’nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

2 Praise for the Lord's Victory

Pray Psalm 144.1, 2.

Blessed be the LORD my Rock,
Who trains my hands for war,
And my fingers for battle—
My lovingkindness and my fortress,
My high tower and my deliverer,
My shield and *the One* in whom I take refuge,
Who subdues my people under me.

Read Isaiah 42.10-13.

Reflect.

1. Why should we praise the Lord? How should we praise Him?
2. How is God like a “man of war”?

Meditate.

Praise to the Lord is always appropriate. But in times of uncertainty – or even times of busyness – we can become so occupied by our fears or concerns or numerous obligations, that we lose sight of God's unchanging love and unfailing faithfulness. Thus, rather than know the joy with which He surrounds us in His Kingdom (Rom. 14.17, 18), we become fretful, fearful, snippy, and self-pitying.

Just like many of the people of Judah and Jerusalem in Isaiah's day.

God was working through Isaiah's preaching, counsel, writing, and example to give His people hope. Yes, some very bad things were about to happen. They were necessary to help God's people shake off their attraction to idols, especially those of things and place and pedigree, and to prepare them for the next stage of His unfolding plan of redemption.

But it was important that the people keep their eyes on God; and one way to do that, and to do it throughout the day, is to pray and sing the praises of God.

God commands all nations to praise Him (vv. 10, 11). They don't however, because they don't know Him. What's our excuse?

One day all nations will praise God, but for many of the people of those nations – living and dead – it will be too late to realize the benefit of what their praises extol (Phil. 2.5-11). God's people know better, and they must reinforce what they know, and show it to the world, by praising the Lord throughout the day in words and songs.

A mighty warlord was coming to take Jerusalem captive; God is a mightier warlord than Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonians would exult in victory over the people of Judah and Jerusalem, but the shout of victory at Christ's return will make their shouts seem like a whisper (1 Thess. 4.16). And while the enemies of God would realize victory in the short-term, in the end, God will vanquish *all* His foes, every rebellious nation and person, and all the wicked powers and principalities of the air (vv. 12, 13).

Concentrate on God, and heed His summons to praise and sing new songs to the Lord. The Lord inhabits the praises of His people (Ps. 22.3), so as we praise Him, we will realize His presence, promise, and power in

sustaining and renewing ways. Israel would need to praise Him to sustain themselves until God brought them back from captivity. We need praise, and will continue to need it, until Jesus returns to take us to glory with Him.

Prepare.

1. Given that God is so worthy of our praise, why are we so reticent in giving it?
2. We praise God when we recall His promises and victories, survey His virtues and works, and celebrate His many blessings, both those we have realized and those we anticipate. How could you begin to bring more praise of God into your daily walk with Him?
3. How does praising God work to renew us in mind and heart? How can this enhance our daily experience of His Kingdom?

This Word, the Christ, the cause of both our being at first (for he was in God) and of our well-being, this very Word has now appeared as man. He alone is both God and man. He is the Author of all blessings to us. By him, we, being taught to live well, are sent on our way to life eternal.... This is the New Song, the manifestation of the Word that was in the beginning and before the beginning. The Savior, who has existed before, has in recent days appeared. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD), Exhortation to the Greeks 1

Guide me in praising You this day, O Lord, that I might obey Your every command and...

Pray Psalm 144.

Whatever struggles you will face today, the Lord is mightier. Offer your praise to Him, as you prepare for the day ahead, and take His praise with you as you go.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 144 (*Tidings: O Zion, Haste, Your Mission High Fulfilling*)

Blest be the Lord, Who trains my hands for battle;
He is my Rock, my steadfast love and strength!
He is my shield; no foe can shake or rattle;
He will subdue them all to me at length.

Refrain v. 15

Happy are they on whom blessings fall!
Blessed are the people who on Jesus' mercy call!

Lord, who are we, that You regard and love us?
Why should You care for our poor sinful plight?
We are but breath; You dwell on high above us;
our days like shadows pass before Your light.

Refrain

Bow down the heav'ns, come down and touch the mountains.
Flash forth like lightning; scatter all Your foes!
Send out Your arrows, send them out to rout them;
stretch forth Your hand and save us from all woes!

Refrain

From every foe and every lie deliver!
Then will we sing new songs unto Your praise.
Rescue Your servants, who are Yours forever;
grant us deliv'rance by Your hand always.

Refrain

Bless, Lord, our children, strengthen them forever.
All our provision, day by day supply.
Bless our endeavors; from distress deliver.
Keep us from harm and all distressing cries.

3 Birth of a World

Pray Psalm 79.8, 9.

Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us!
Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us,
For we have been brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation,
For the glory of Your name;
And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins,
For Your name's sake!

Read Isaiah 42.14-20.

Reflect.

1. What is being born in these verses?
2. In what sense is God's Messenger blind and deaf?

Meditate.

This brief passage includes some powerful images designed to help the people of Isaiah's day focus on the dramatic and radical work of restoration God is promising to accomplish.

First is the image of childbirth (v. 14). Childbirth means pain and suffering; it also means a new beginning. But notice what is being "born": the turning upside-down of the natural order (v. 15) – mountains and hills leveled, vegetation withered, water overflowing, and fresh pools drying up. What God is going to do will upend everything His people understood about "normal" or "natural".

Then a note of gentleness: leading the blind, giving them light, helping them through crooked places, accompanying them on their journey (v. 16) – like leading a newborn child into the first stages of new life. In Isaiah's day, few people went to such lengths for those who could not help themselves (cf. Amos 2.6-8). God would do that for His people.

At the same time, the power and influence of those who trust in idols will be "turned back" (v. 17). In the presence of what God is doing, false religions and worldviews, and those who hold to them, haven't got a chance.

God calls His deaf and blind people to hear and see (v. 18). They must understand with the eye of faith that God's promised restoration will bring them into an altogether new and different world, and they must prepare for that by waiting on the Lord now.

God is sending a deaf and blind Messenger to serve His purposes (v. 19). How could that possibly encourage the people of Isaiah's day? The Messenger God is sending is impervious to lies, distractions from God's Word, or diversions from His path and purpose. He is blind to vain offers of glory outside God's will, and deaf to suggestions that He could do better by listening to someone other than God (cf. Matt. 4.1-11).

Israel has heard "many things" from their great prophet and God, but they do not yet hear as they should, nor keep the Word as God intends. For that, they will need more revelation from Isaiah and others, coupled with a time of testing from the Lord.

Prepare.

1. Meditate on Acts 17.1-9. How does God's salvation turn our world upside-down?
2. In what sense and ways has the coming of God's Messenger "birthed" a new age?
3. What do we need to do to improve in hearing and observing God's promises?

*It is evident, indeed, that some possess ears better able to hear the words of God. But to those who do not have those ears, what does he say? "Hear, you deaf, and, you blind, behold." Also, "I opened my mouth and panted," and "You have broken the teeth of sinners." All these things were said in reference to the faculties that render service for spiritual food and spiritual doctrine. Basil the Great (330-379 AD), *Homilies on the Psalms 16.13 (Psalm 33)**

Blind me, Lord, to everything that is not of You, and make me deaf to the allurements of the devil, so that, like Jesus, I may...

Pray Psalm 79.

Pray for yourself and your church, that you may "see" any ways that you have allowed the world to become established in your soul, and any ways you may have listened to counsel from anyone other than the Lord.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 79 (*Passion Chorale: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

O God the nations all Your inheritance have spoiled!
Your City have they ruined, Your temple they have soiled!
Your servants' bodies all to the birds of heav'n are thrown;
The flesh of all Your faithful the jaws of beasts now own.

The blood of faithful servants like water flows around;
And none are there Your saints to commit into the ground.
Our neighbors mock and scorn us: How long, O Lord, how long?
How long will You be angry and scorn our mournful song?

Pour out, O Lord, Your wrath on all who deny Your Name;
Who trust You not nor seek You, bring down to deepest shame!
For they have with great rancor Your precious saints devoured;
Lay waste their habitation at this late dreadful hour.

Why should the nations mock and say, "Where now is their God?"
Let there be known among them harsh vengeance for our blood!
Hear, Lord, our groans and sighing; preserve us by Your pow'r.
For we are fairly dying each day and hour by hour.

Reproach those who reproach us with judgment sevenfold!
Let thanks and praise to You by Your precious flock be told.
We are Your sheep, O Savior, we thank You all our days.
Look on us with Your favor as we declare Your praise.

4 Who Will Hear?

Pray Psalm 33.1-5.

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD *is* right,
And all His work *is done* in truth.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Read Isaiah 42.21-25.

Reflect.

1. What pleases God? What does not?
2. How would you describe God's anger at His people? A little? A lot?

Meditate.

God is pleased when His righteousness abounds (v. 21). Righteousness reflects the character of God. The world was made for righteousness. People thrive and flourish in righteousness. When we walk in righteousness, we partake of the Lord Himself, for He manifests His righteousness in us. And this is pleasing to God.

To accomplish this pleasing objective, God gave His Law to His people (v. 21) – an “honorable” achievement, if ever there was one. His Law is life and liberty and love – the very stuff of righteousness.

So, why were the people of Israel so bereft of blessing, snared in pits, chained in transgressions, fearful of other nations, and despairing of help (v. 22)?

Because they would not listen to God (v. 23). Consequently, God Himself gave them over to their destitution and desperation (v. 24), to show them the folly of living outside the parameters of His Law. And His anger was great as He did, sending the Assyrians to destroy and deport the people of Israel, and – soon – the Babylonians to do the same to the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

And still, the people did not hear God's Word, and “did not take it to heart” (v. 25).

We do well never to forget that “our God is a consuming fire” and that it is “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 12.29; 10.31).

Prepare.

1. Meditate on Hebrews 12.3-11. What forms does the discipline of God take today? Why does God consider such discipline necessary?
2. Since the Law of God is righteous and honorable, what place should it have in the Christian's life?

3. What does it mean to “hear” the Word of God and “take it to heart”? What can keep us from doing this?

As Isaiah writes, “Who gave Jacob up to the looters and Israel to the ponderers.” It was the Lord, against whom we sinned, in whose ways we would not walk and whose law we refused to obey. So he unleashed the fury of his anger against us. And again, when Solomon strayed from the precepts and paths of the Lord, it was recorded, “The Lord stirred up Satan against Solomon himself.” Cyprian of Carthage (fl. 248-258 AD), *The Lord’s Prayer* 25

Help me daily to hear You speaking to me, Lord, and to take to heart all Your Word, so that I...

Pray Psalm 33.

So many reasons to praise and trust the Lord! As you pray this psalm, let the Lord bring His many blessings to mind, and rejoice in His power, wisdom, sovereignty, salvation, and presence.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 33 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

Sing with rejoicing in the Lord, for praise becomes His righteous ones!

With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.

His love prevails the whole world through; the Lord loves truth and righteousness.

God spoke and heaven came to be, and all its hosts His Spirit wrought.

He heaps the waters of the sea; the deeps their dwelling place are taught.

Let all below now fear the Lord; let all in awe of Him abide!

The worlds exist by Jesus’ Word; let all on earth in Him confide.

He nullifies the nations’ plans; forever stands His sov’ reign Word.

All they are blessed who with Him stand – the chosen people of the Lord.

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.

Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;

He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!

We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

5 The You May Know and Believe

Pray Psalm 72.18, 19.

Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only does wondrous things!
And blessed *be* His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled *with* His glory.
Amen and Amen.

Read Isaiah 43.1-21.

Reflect.

1. This glorious promise of restoration unfolds in two stages. Can you identify them?
2. Why does God love His people so much? To what end is He going to restore them?

Meditate.

There are few places in Scripture where the Lord proclaims more clearly and effusively His love for His people. His purpose in doing so here is to comfort His people before their great trial begins, and to assure them that Babylon is not the last stage of their relationship with Him.

They are His people. He called them by name, and they belong to Him (v. 1). How could He not be with them during their time of trial (v. 2)? He reminds them of His Name and attributes, and of what He has done for them in the past (vv. 3). And He insists that He will do the same and more for them in time to come (vv. 4-7).

Though the people of Judah and Jerusalem may now be blind and deaf to the Lord, yet He has appointed them to be His servants and witnesses (vv. 8-13). His purpose for them will not fail. He will destroy Babylon (v. 14), and, as He had delivered them through the Red Sea (v. 16), so He will make a “road in the wilderness” to deliver them to Himself (v. 19).

While the short-term promise is of return from Babylon, a longer-term blessing appears to be in view. When all creation is redeemed, and God has done “a new thing” (v. 19), then even the desert will abound with life and refreshment for the people of God (vv. 18-20). God promises to give “drink” to His people, whereupon they will declare His praise and fulfill their calling to be His witnesses (vv. 20, 21). It takes no great imagination to see in these words a reference to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Who is our power to fulfill our appointment as witnesses to Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 4.13, 14; 7.37-39; Acts 1.8).

Again, Isaiah is merely dropping hints here, and setting the stage for the remaining chapters of his book, when he will richly unfold the mysteries to which he points in these middle chapters.

Prepare.

1. God appointed Israel to be His witness. Could they possibly fail in that calling? Explain.
2. God has appointed you to be His witness (Acts 1.8). What does that require of you? Can you expect to know fullness of life in God’s love without fulfilling this calling?
3. The second part of this prophecy pertains to the times in which we live. How does it lead us to think about what God promises us? What He expects of us?

“You are mine.” For we are said to have been Christ’s, even before the separation from God that occurred when we as sinners went out of the garden, though by nature we were always God’s. But he has made us once more to be his own through the Holy Spirit making us strong through every trial. Procopius of Gaza (465-530 AD), Commentary on Isaiah 41.1-13

Lord, You have appointed me to be Your servant and witness, and I ask You to help me today as I...

Pray Psalm 72.

How many Kingdom promises can you claim from this psalm for your life today? Receive them with thanksgiving, claim them with resolve, and make plans to live them out today.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 72 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

O give the King Your judgment, Lord, and righteousness Your Son;
and let Him judge by Your good Word the need of every one.

Let now the mountains ring with peace, the hills in righteousness.
Let justice rise, oppression cease, and all the needy bless.

Let nations fear You while the sun and moon endure on high;
refresh, renew us, every one, like sweet rain falling from the sky.

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus’ reign endures;
Let peace increase from sea to sea ‘til moonlight shall be no more.

And let the Righteous rule the earth, and let His foes bow low;
Let nations praise His matchless worth, and all His bidding do.

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace;
All they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

Let Christ be praised and all the gold of Sheba be His right;
Let blessings to His Name be told, and prayers made both day and night.

And let the earth abound with grain, let fields His fame proclaim;
and may our King forever reign and nations bless His great Name.

Now bless the God of Israel Who wondrous works performs.
And bless His Name, His glory tell both now and forever more!

6 God Not Honored

Pray Psalm 116.1, 2.

I love the LORD, because He has heard
My voice *and* my supplications.
Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as I live.

Read Isaiah 43.22-28.

Reflect.

1. If the people weren't devoting these things to God, as He commanded, what were they doing with them?
2. What were they offering Him instead?

Meditate.

The enormity of God's grace is magnified against the backdrop of the enormity of His people's sin. His Law was clear about what God required from His people in the way of sacrifices and offerings. These were instituted to give the people a means of expressing their faith in and love for God, and of helping to keep before them the idea that the grace of God is mediated via sacrifice.

But instead of offering the sacrifices God required, the people of Judah and Jerusalem offered Him a life of increasing transgression (v. 24). We may suppose they consumed what should have been the sacrifices due to the Lord on themselves, just as many people today consume God's tithe and offer Him a pittance, if at all.

The sacrifices God required of His people were not burdensome (v. 23), but they were necessary. God took their failure in this area as a sign that they were "weary" of Him. Fair enough. He'd send them to someone else to rule over them.

Verses 25-28 remind us of Isaiah 1, when God called His people to reason with Him, promising to make their sins as white as snow. The message of forgiveness and restoration has been constant throughout Isaiah's work, and here it is again. But before forgiveness and restoration must come curses and reproaches (v. 28).

This could have been avoided if only God's people would have been faithful in calling on Him (v. 22).

Prepare.

1. God requires tithes and offerings from His people. Why? What do we gain by giving these?
2. God called His people to put Him "in remembrance" (v. 26). What does that mean? How should we practice this today?
3. If you were commanded to state your case before the Lord, seeking acquittal for your transgressions, what would you say?

*We are just when we acknowledge that we are sinners, and our justice depends not on our personal merit but rather on the mercy of God, as holy Scripture says: "The just is an accuser of himself in the beginning of his plea." And in another place, "State your sins, that you may be justified." Jerome (347-420 AD), *Against the Pelagians* 1.13*

I am a sinner, Lord, and I come to You not to contend, but to confess, that I...

Pray Psalm 116.

As you pray, review the many ways God has been gracious, righteous, and merciful to you. What will you render to Him today?

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 116 (*Mit Freuden Zart: All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)

I love the Lord because He hears my cries and pleas for mercy.
Because He bends to me His ears, my prayers shall ever thus be.
The snares of death encompassed me; hell's grip could not unloosened be;
Distress and anguish pressed me.

I called to God, "O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!"
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
And dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
And pay my vows most truly.

How sweet to Him when saints depart – save me, Your servant, Savior!
From sin You loosed my wand'ring heart; I praise Your Name forever!
On You I call, my vows to pay; here in Your presence I would stay
Your praise to offer ever.

7 The Servant Who Redeems

Pray Psalm 118.1.

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!
For His mercy endures forever.

Review Isaiah chapters 42, 43.

Reflect.

1. How many different ways does God emphasize His grace toward His people in these chapters?
2. What does God expect from those who would know His blessings? Is He just in expecting this?

Meditate.

The captivity of Judah and Jerusalem is approaching – not in Isaiah’s lifetime, but shortly thereafter. Undoubtedly, the people will have plenty of time to hear about the growing power of Nebuchadnezzar, and to prepare their hearts for what Isaiah has prophesied.

But they must not lose hope, and it’s never too late to seek and call upon the Lord. In these two chapters, God reminds the people of His grace, and tells them in very explicit terms what they can do to know His presence, even through their time of trial. He must discipline His people, but He will not abandon them. He will bring them back from Babylon in due course, and, beyond that, He is storing up even greater blessings of renewal and restoration for all who look to Him in faith.

A Servant is coming, a Messenger of God’s covenant, and He will bring the fullness of blessings promised all the way back to Abraham. Healing of the weak, healing of the earth, restoration of God’s people, the forgiveness of sins, and a worldwide celebration of God that reaches the very ends of the earth: these are what the Servant of God will accomplish when He comes to restore God’s people to Him.

The people must now, immediately, and continuously, leave off their rebellion, repent of their sins, call upon the Lord, and trust in His Word. They are about to suffer a great trial; but they can know Him present with them in it, and thus be comforted, as they look ahead to the new work of God to come.

Prepare.

1. God said that His Servant/Messenger would be as a “covenant” from Him for the people (42.6). Why is that an appropriate term for thinking about Jesus?
2. From what we see in these chapters, what can we do, as we endure trials of various kinds, to make sure that we know the presence of the Lord with us?
3. What’s your primary takeaway from Isaiah 42, 43?

*What I am going to do, he says, merits still more admiration than the things done [in the past]. He adds what will be: “And I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the dry land.” Some have thought that these declarations relate to the return from Babylon. This is wrong, for he did not favor them at that time, while they were returning from exile, either with a strange road or with rivers. But he is calling the Gentiles “the desert” [wilderness], and the preachings of the apostles “rivers” and the course that escapes error “the way.” Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD), *Commentary on Isaiah 13.43.19**

*Thank You, Lord, that You made a Way for me to come through the desert of my sin into the refreshing waters of Your grace!
Make me a fountain of living water today as I...*

Pray Psalm 118.

This is a most encouraging psalm. As you pray it, let the Spirit speak into the day ahead, and let God's Word encourage you in specific ways for your walk with and work for Him today.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 118 (*St. George's Windsor: Come, Ye Thankful People, Come*)

Thank the Lord, His love endures! All to whom His love is sure,
all who fear Him day by day, let them thanks and praise now say!
Out of my distress I cry; He will hear me from on high.
He will free me from all fear. What can man do to me here?

For the Lord stands next to me; He will give me victory!
Over all who hate my life I will triumph through the strife!
In His grace I refuge find; in His steadfast love so kind.
Trust not princes, trust not men – Christ shall be our haven then!

Praise the Lord, in whose great Name all His foes are brought to shame!
Though they swarmed on every side, in God's Name He dashed their pride!
Like a fire His judgment goes to consume His ardent foes;
Though they pushed against Him hard, He was rescued by the Lord.

In the Savior we are strong! He is all our strength and song!
To His grace now raise your voice; in His righteousness rejoice!
For the Lord does valiantly; we shall live eternally.
Praise His works with all your breath, you whom He redeems from death.

All who know Christ's righteousness His great Name now thank and bless!
Though His gate full righteous is, He our saving mercy is.
Cast aside and left alone, Christ is now our Cornerstone!
God has made His Son and Word our salvation: Praise the Lord!

Blessed are they who in His Name come and Jesus' grace proclaim.
God His light upon us shines in the Savior's sacrifice.
Praise and thanks to You, O Lord; we extol Your holy Word!
Thanks to You for You are good! Thanks to our great loving God!

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What are *Servant* and *Messenger* appropriate terms for the One Who comes to bring salvation and restoration to God's people?
2. How would you describe the scope and nature of the *covenant* that Servant/Messenger embodies and brings?
3. What does God require of us, if we would know that covenant and all its blessings?
4. How can we know the presence of God in the midst of trials and tribulations?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Isaiah 42 and 43? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.