

Isaiah Chapter 41

Verses 1-7

“The righteous man from the east” is certainly a reference to Cyrus the Great of Persia, though he is not named until (44:28).

He is introduced as the one who is raised up from the East to fulfill the will of God.

Both the Hebrew and the Septuagint have “righteousness,” a noun rather than an adjective, in the King James Version.

Thus, it is God who raised up righteousness toward His people in the deliverance He provided through Cyrus the Great (see 45:8).

Isaiah 41:1 "Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew [their] strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment."

The coasts of lands around the Mediterranean sea and the islands represent the nations.

The LORD challenged the nations that refused to wait on Him to be silent in awe and then move to renew their strength (40:31).

Meaning to collect their best arguments to plead their cause before Him.

We see in this, that the people of the islands are to be quiet before the LORD.

They have nothing worthwhile to say anyway.

We all shall stand before Jesus and be judged.

The renewing of the strength must be in the Lord.

We will each have to account for ourselves in front of the Lord.

Isaiah 41:2 "Who raised up the righteous [man] from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made [him] rule over kings? he gave [them] as the dust to his sword, [and] as driven stubble to his bow."

“Man from the east”:

The LORD anointed Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, to accomplish His righteous will by conquering Babylon (in 539 B.C.), and allowing some of the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem (41:25; 44:28; 45:1).

He founded the Persian Empire and ruled from 550 – 530 B.C.

This Cyrus came from the east of Babylon.

He could have been from Persia or Elam.

It appears God called him for the task, and empowered him with the ability to do just that.

It was not his righteousness, but the righteousness God gave him.

This man is of God's choosing to rule over kings in the land.

His abilities are great, because God empowered him for the task.

It was of no difficulty at all for Cyrus to conquer these lands, and put them under his rule.

Isaiah 41:3 "He pursued them, [and] passed safely; [even] by the way [that] he had not gone with his feet."

Cyrus accomplished his conquests with great ease in territories he had never before visited.

It appears he had no trouble at all with the terrain that others had thought impossible to pass over.

We must remember in this that the path was easy, because God has directed him.

We have learned in other lessons that God makes whoever He wants to be ruler.

God is in control.

Isaiah 41:4 "Who hath wrought and done [it], calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I [am] he."

“First ... last”:

He existed before history and will exist after it.

“I am he”:

It is legitimate to translate the two Hebrews words thus represented by “I am” (see also 42:8; 43:10, 13; 46:4), a messianic title appropriated by Jesus frequently as explicit testimony to His deity (Mark 13:6; 14:62; Luke 21:8; John 8:28, 58; 13:19).

The title came originally from the LORD’s self revelation to Moses (in Exodus 3:14).

We know the answer to this.

No idol god could have done this for Cyrus.

This is from the One true God.

God is the First and the Last.

“LORD” in this particular instance, is speaking of Jehovah.

The fact that the First and Last was mentioned, shows the eternity of God.

Verses 5-7

Instead of turning to the LORD when they saw His anointed one, Cyrus, approaching, the nations turned to one another for help and made more idols (see 40:18-20 regarding Isaiah’s description of idols and their makers).

Isaiah 41:5 "The isles saw [it], and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came."

The land, which had been so unlikely to be defeated, is defeated by Cyrus.

It is difficult for others to comprehend why he was able to do this.

It caused them to be afraid for fear he might conquer them also.

Isaiah 41:6 "They helped every one his neighbor; and [every one] said to his brother, Be of good courage."

We see Isaiah telling them here, that the idols of their own, and the idols of their friends, are not enough to save them.

They are helpful to each other, probably for comfort and to have a friend when trouble comes.

Isaiah 41:7 "So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, [and] he that smootheth [with] the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It [is] ready for the soldering; and he fastened it with nails, [that] it should not be moved."

All of these were involved in making idols.

They seem to encourage each other, that their trade for these would flourish, and they could make the sales they once made.

Verses 8-9

“Thou, Israel, art my servant” is the first reference to the Servant of the LORD, here pictured as the believing remnant of Israel.

The designation servant (ebed), means a slave or bondsman, yet in this context it has honorable connotations that indicate the close intimacy between master and servant.

The term is used frequently throughout this section of Isaiah’s prophecy (42:19; 44:1-2; 45:4; 48:20), and reaches its greatest climax (in 52:13 - 53:12).

Isaiah 41:8 "But thou, Israel, [art] my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."

“Israel art my servant”:

The faithful of the nation receive the honored corporate designation as the servant of the LORD.

As his servant, they stood in bold contrast to the rest of the nations (verses 5-7).

Israel as the servant (in 42:18-25).

“Abraham my friend”:

“Friend” is an even higher designation than “servant” (John 15:14-15; 2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23), and speaks of a greater faithfulness.

We see that God has never forgotten His promises to Abraham.

He has not forsaken His people (Israel).

Notice, also, that the blessings that came on Israel were because of God's love for His friend, Abraham.

Problems come to Israel to make her return to the worship of the One True God.

Israel of old belonged to God, because He had separated them out as His people and gave them the law.

Spiritual Israel (Christians), belongs to God, because we have been bought and paid for with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 41:9 "[Thou] whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou [art] my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away."

"The end of the earth", spoken of here, is Ur of the Chaldees.

Of course, it could also be the children of Israel being brought out of Egypt (the world).

The Holy Land is the home of physical Israel.

They may be temporarily dwelling in another place, but their home is Israel.

God promised this land to the descendants of Abraham, forever.

We saw in our study of Joseph in Egypt, how God blessed Joseph, because he never forgot God.

Verses 10-20

In view of the judgment that is coming upon Israel, God reminds her, "I am with thee ... I am thy God."

The designation "thou worm Jacob" is a reminder to Israel of her frailty and need for God who is pictured as her "redeemer" and the "Holy One of Israel."

The latter designation is Isaiah's favorite expression for God and appears equally throughout both halves of the book.

The prophet then gives a beautiful picture of God's provision of water to abundantly supply the needs of His people.

God promises them "rivers, fountains," and "springs of water".

Because of this supply of water, He will also plant various trees in the wilderness; the "cedar shittah" (acacia), "myrtle, oil tree" (ets shemen, wild olive), "fir, pine," and "box" (boxwood).

These seven trees, all common to Syria and Israel, would have been especially well known only to an author who lived in that region.

They symbolize the perfection of God's work on behalf of His people.

Isaiah 41:10 "Fear thou not; for I [am] with thee: be not dismayed; for I [am] thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

"Fear thou not":

Israel need not fear God's destructive judgment, as the rest of the nations do because He is their God and faithful to His promise to restore the nation.

This is a promise to physical Israel, and a promise to spiritual Israel, as well.

Fear is the opposite of faith.

God does not want His people to fear, but to have faith in Him.

He was with the children of Israel (physical), when He dwelt in the Holy of Holies above the Mercy Seat.

He is with all believers in Christ, because He dwells inside of us.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Jesus is the Right Hand of God.

Jesus is the doer part of the Godhead.

Jesus is Creator God.

He is the Word of God that created all things.

John 1:1-3 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "The same was in the beginning with God." "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Notice, it is by His righteousness that we are strengthened and held up.

This is not just in the past tense, but in the future as well, since God never changes.

Verses 11-13

Through the LORD's help, the enemies of Israel were to be weakened and vanquished (60:12; Zech. 12:3), while God strengthened Israel.

Isaiah 41:11 "Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish."

The Hebrews were feared, because of their relationship with God, but many were incensed against them.

They were jealous of the Hebrews, because they were the chosen of God.

God's wrath is against those who hate Israel.

It really does not matter whether it is physical Israel, or the Christians (spiritual Israel).

God strengthens and protects His own.

He will cause problems to come to anyone who comes against His family.

It is a dangerous thing to come against God's chosen.

God will see that the enemies of His chosen do not prosper.

He will go so far as to do away with them.

Isaiah 41:12 "Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, [even] them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought."

This was proven before at places like Jericho, when God fought for His children.

It was even more apparent when God caused Pharaoh to release His children after 10 plagues had come.

God destroyed Pharaoh's army at the Red sea, just after He had saved His own in the Red sea.

It is no problem to God to destroy millions, if it is necessary.

It is His world.

He can do what He wants to with the world and its inhabitants.

Isaiah 41:13 "For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

The right hand of man symbolizes the spiritual side.

The strength that we have is a spiritual strength.

He is our very present help in trouble.

We have nothing to fear, if we are totally obedient to God.

Psalm 18:2-3: "The LORD [is] my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, [and] my high tower."

2 Corinthians 12:9: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Isaiah Chapter 41 Questions

1. What message was sent to the islands in verse 1?
2. What type of renewing of their strength is spoken of?
3. Who is the righteous man from the east, probably, speaking of?
4. Where was he from?
5. How was he strong enough to rule over kings?
6. Who, in truth, is responsible for someone being a king, or ruler?
7. Who is the First and the Last?
8. LORD, in verse 4, is speaking of whom?
9. Why did the isles fear Cyrus?
10. Why are they helpful to each other?
11. What do all of those mentioned, in verse 7, have in common?
12. God has never forgotten His promises to _____.
13. What were they encouraging each other about?
14. Why would God bless the Israelites?
15. Why had problems come to Israel?
16. Why do the Christians belong to God?
17. What is the meaning of "end of the earth" in verse 9?
18. What is Egypt symbolic of?
19. How long did God promise Israel to be the home of His people?
20. Why did God always bless Joseph?
21. Who is this promise made to?

22. What is the opposite of faith?
23. Where was the presence of God, when he dwelt with the physical house of Israel?
24. Where is He with the Christians?
25. Who is the Right Hand of God?
26. _____ is Creator God.
27. What will happen to those who oppress God's people?
28. Where are two places we see God destroy the believers' enemies?
29. What does the right hand symbolize?