



# Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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# God's Courtroom Scene (43:8-13)

- In this passage, Isaiah portrays the LORD as being on trial!
- He proclaims that he alone is God, but is accused of lying.
- His rivals, the pagan gods, have as their witnesses the many people who worship them.
- The LORD has only the blind and deaf Israelite captives to serve as his witnesses.
- As they are led in to take the witness stand a hush falls over the courtroom.
- Surely the LORD's case is lost!
- But no; these feeble witnesses produce irrefutable evidence of the truth of the LORD's claim – he *alone* foretold the things that are now taking place.
- Immediately the whole atmosphere in the court changes.
- The opposition is reduced to silence and the LORD's case carries the day.

# God's Courtroom Scene (43:8-13)

- And something else happens.
- The witnesses *themselves* are transformed.
- Their own blindness and deafness are swallowed up by a new assurance, and they leave the court with heads held high.
- The feeble people of God can and will be his witnesses!
- Truth is on their side, and as they rise above their fears and proclaim it, that truth will grip them and transform them.
- Witnessing is not an onerous burden, but an unspeakable *privilege*.
- It is a means not only proclaiming the truth about God to the world, but of strengthening God's people themselves.

# God's Courtroom Scene (43:8-13)

<sup>43:8</sup> *Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, those who are deaf, even though they have ears!* <sup>9</sup> *All nations gather together, the peoples assemble. Who among them announced this? Who predicted earlier events for us? Let them produce their witnesses to testify they were right; let them listen and affirm, "It is true."* <sup>10</sup> *"You are my witnesses," says the LORD, "my servant whom I have chosen so that you may consider and believe in me, and understand that I am he. No god was formed before me, and none will outlive me."* <sup>11</sup> *I, I am the LORD, and there is no deliverer besides me.* <sup>12</sup> *I decreed and delivered and proclaimed, and there was no other god among you. You are my witnesses," says the LORD, "that I am God."* <sup>13</sup> *From this day forward I am he; no one can deliver from my power; I will act, and who can prevent it?"*

**43:8** *Bring out the people* who are blind, even though they have eyes, those who are deaf, even though they have ears!

- Isaiah seems to have a special liking for presenting his material in the form of a “courtroom trial.”<sup>1</sup>
- But you will notice that the **tone** of the passage is not that of calm, legal investigation, but rather one of **passionate speech**.<sup>1</sup>
- The author’s concern here is for the “**people**” of Israel.<sup>1</sup>
- The command here to “**Bring out the people**” is not a reference to their deliverance from captivity.<sup>2</sup>
- Instead, they are being summoned to appear in court.<sup>2</sup>
- Yet what an improbable set of witnesses they are!<sup>2</sup>
- Their incapacity seems to preclude them from giving evidence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leupold, H. C. Exposition of Isaiah, Volume 2 (p. 83)

<sup>2</sup> Mackay, John L. – A Study Commentary on Isaiah Volume 2: Chapters 40-66 – p. 115



**43:8** *Bring out the people who are **blind**, even though they **have eyes**, those who are **deaf**, even though they **have ears**!*

- The Israelites were described in the *previous* chapter as “*deaf*” and “*blind*”, *not physically* but *spiritually*:
  - *Listen, you **deaf** ones! Take notice, you **blind** ones! My servant is truly **blind**, my messenger is truly **deaf**. My covenant partner, the servant of the Lord, is truly **blind**.* (Isaiah 42:18-19)
- Nevertheless, Isaiah tells us that because they “*have eyes*” and “*ears*” they *are* able to *bear witness* to the events which they have experienced.
- So, they can *testify* to the fact that the duration and outcome of their exile had been prophesied ahead of time with great clarity and accuracy.
- But being “*blind*” and “*deaf*”, these Israelites are *incapable* of appreciating the *spiritual significance* of what they had undergone.
- Even so, the LORD can point to their continued existence and physical restoration to the land as indisputable evidence that what he had foretold has been accomplished.

**43:9** *All nations gather together, the peoples assemble. Who among them announced this? Who predicted earlier events for us? Let them produce their witnesses to testify they were right; let them listen and affirm, "It is true."*

- The previous verse referred to the summoning of *Israel*, but *here* we see the LORD summoning "*all*" the "*nations*" to come forward and give an answer to the court.
- The LORD, as Judge, issues a *challenge* to the pagan nations: "*Who among [you] announced this?*"
- In other words, which of the gods of the pagan nations is capable of declaring "*this*" – that is, "*earlier events*", (previous predictions) which have subsequently been fulfilled?
- This is similar to a question the LORD directed to the pagan nations in the *previous* chapter:
  - *Let them produce evidence! ...Tell us about your earlier predictive oracles, so we may examine them and see how they were fulfilled.* (Isaiah 41:22)

**43:9** *All nations gather together, the peoples assemble. Who among them announced this? **Who predicted earlier events for us?** Let them **produce their witnesses** to testify they were right; **let them listen and affirm, “It is true.”***

- *“Who predicted earlier events for **us?**”* – “us” here refers to the LORD and those assembled in his court.
- This is a call for those gods (as represented by the nations who worship them) to *“produce their **witnesses**”* – *“witnesses”* who are competent to substantiate any claims that these gods had made predictions that were genuinely fulfilled.
- *“let **them listen**”* – *“them”* refers to the assembled nations who are expected to assess the evidence that is being presented to the “court”.



43:10 “You are my **witnesses**,” says the LORD, “my servant whom I have chosen so that you may consider and believe in me, and understand that I am he. No god was formed before me, and none will outlive me.

- Here the trial advances to a place where all those challenging God’s honor have failed to make their case – apparently, “**witnesses**” for the opposition were nowhere to be found.
- Therefore the LORD now moves the trial on to its proper conclusion.
- The LORD **does** have “**witnesses**” – his own people from the nation of Israel.
- Israel is **not** a mighty worldly power capable of dominating other nations.
- But she is to be a witness to what God has done for her, a witness by her very existence and a witness by the **testimony** that she can give of all that has happened.

43:10 “You are **my witnesses**,” says the LORD, “**my servant whom I have chosen so that** you may consider and believe in me, and understand that I am he. No god was formed before me, and none will outlive me.

- “**my witnesses... my servant**”. The choice of parallel terms here is significant, as each term helps further define the other term.
- The calling of the LORD’s “**servant**” is to be **living evidence** of the God’s unique ability to save his people.
- This meaning is further amplified by the subsequent purpose clause: “**whom I have chosen so that ...**”
- **Why** were these people chosen? In order that they might know by personal experience that the Lord alone is God.
- So these servants are called to be “**witnesses**”, and these “**witnesses**” are the LORD’s “**servant**”: those who know the truth of God because they have entered into bondage to him and **in** that bondage have learned his character.

**43:10** “You are my witnesses,” says the LORD, “my servant whom I have chosen so that you may consider and believe in me, and **understand** that I am he. **No god was formed before me**, and none will outlive me.

- Next God declares his **uniqueness**: “**No god was formed before me, and none will outlive me**”
- Before any “**god**” was ever “**formed**” by pagan worshippers, he was the self-existent One.
- And long after all those gods are gone, “**the LORD**” (Yahweh) will continue as the self-sufficient One: “**I AM that I AM**” (cf. Ex 3:14).
- And so what Israel is called to learn is not **merely** that God is great or loving or just or powerful, but much more.
- They must “**understand**” that there is **no other**, that **he alone** is the one with whom all creation must come to terms.

43:11 **I, I am the LORD, and there is no deliverer besides me.**

- As a triumphal conclusion to the truth expressed in the preceding verse, the Lord now identifies Himself as the one true “*deliverer*”.
- The personal pronoun “*I*” is repeated, to emphasize the fact that God Himself is a **Person**, one who identifies Himself by a **personal pronoun**.
- The use of the covenant name (Yahweh) here calls to mind the eternity of God, the great I AM, who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush.
- After that the idea of salvation (“*deliverer*”) is immediately introduced, just as it was also at Sinai.
- There the covenant name (Yahweh) was revealed, but that Name, expressing God’s eternity, was connected to an act of powerful redemption and deliverance.

43:12 *I decreed and delivered and proclaimed, and there was no other god among you. You are my witnesses,” says the LORD, “that I am God.*

- What the idol-gods were unable to “announce” (see verse 9), the LORD had personally “*decreed*”
- The Hebrew word translated “*decreed*” here is a verb that means “to set clearly before someone information which they previously did not have”.
- Furthermore, the LORD had translated *prediction* into *fact* and had “*delivered*” them – decisively releasing Israel from Egyptian bondage.
- He then brought the people to Sinai, where he clearly “*proclaimed*” to them who he was, and how and why he had acted in the way he had.



**43:12** *I decreed and delivered and proclaimed, and **there was no other god among you.** You are my **witnesses,**” says the LORD, “that I am God.*

- And so the history of the Israelites was explained to them, and they were not left to grope in the dark concerning the significance of the momentous events which had brought about their deliverance.
- Furthermore, “*there was no other god among you*” – that is, there was no other deity to whose power the Exodus events could be attributed.
- Even though, sadly, there was already idolatry to be found among the people (Deut 32:16).
- Of these facts the Israelites as the people of God are “*witnesses*”, and all the evidence proved that the LORD alone is God.

43:13 *From this day forward* [or *From ancient days* – NIV] *I am he; no one can deliver from my power; I will act, and who can prevent it?"*

- There is an exegetical question about the opening words.
- Do they mean that “*From this day forward*” God will show that He is the true God?
- Or, do they refer to the first day, when time began, i.e. “*From ancient days*”
- The latter view appears to me to be the best fit – though either translation is allowed by the grammar.
- If I’m right about that, then the idea here is not that God will from this present time show Himself to be what He is, but that *as long as time has existed* He is God and has so manifested Himself.

**43:13** *From this day forward [or From ancient days – NIV] I am he; no one can deliver from my power; I will act, and who can prevent it?"*

- This verse forms a fitting climax to the assertions of the previous two verses.
- Not only is Yahweh God, he is the **only** God, the self-existent one from the very beginning.
- Are there other gods? Not any who can take out of God's hand what he wishes to hold.
- Are there other divine beings? Not any who can frustrate whatever it is the Lord wishes to do.
- In short, he is of an order of being unlike any other.
- If he calls wicked Babylon to account, Marduk and Nebo can do nothing about it.
- If he determines that the days of her empire are at an end, Ishtar is helpless to prevent it.
- The Lord is God and there is no other, and Israel's experience is a testimony to that fact.

# Luke's Use of the Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah

# Luke's Use of the Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah

- Luke, who wrote the **Gospel of Luke** and the **Book of Acts**, makes frequent use of the language used in Isaiah's Messianic prophecies in order to show how the coming of Christ and subsequent New Testament events are a *fulfillment* of what was prophesied in the Old Testament.
- Two of the clearest examples of this are found in:
  - **Luke 24:47-48** where the resurrected Jesus is speaking to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.
  - **Acts 1:8** where Jesus is speaking to his disciples just prior to his ascension.
- I will show you both these texts along with the texts they cite from Isaiah.
- But the text we will *primarily* focus on is Acts 1:8.



Isaiah 32:1 *Behold, a king will reign in righteousness... <sup>15</sup> until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. <sup>16</sup> Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. <sup>17</sup> And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. (ESV)*

Isaiah 43:10 *"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. (ESV)*

Isaiah 49:5 *And now the LORD says... <sup>6</sup> "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (ESV)*

Luke 24:44 *Then [Jesus] said to [the disciples], "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to **all nations**, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> **You are witnesses of these things.** <sup>49</sup> And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (ESV)*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power **when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**" (ESV)*

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Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

- The use of "*has come upon you*" in Acts 1:8 to describe the arrival of the Spirit on the disciples has a parallel in Isaiah 32:15, "*until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high*", a passage that describes the promise of the transformation of the natural world and the inauguration of God's new era of justice, peace, and prosperity for his people.
- There are a number of other OT passages that teach that the gift of the Spirit will be an indication of the arrival of the new era promised for the last days when God will establish his king who will reign in righteousness. For example:
  - *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.* (Joel 2:28-29 ESV)

Isaiah 49:5 *And now the LORD says...<sup>6</sup> "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (ESV)*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

- Confirmation of this point can be seen from another phrase in the same verse, in which the disciples were to be witnesses to "*the end of the earth*".
- The identical phrase occurs in Isaiah 49:6, where the mission of the "servant of the LORD" is to be "*a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*"
- This verse is quoted explicitly by the Apostle Paul in Acts 13:47, where the Jews in Antioch in Pisidia rejected the Gospel and so Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles.
- This background is important, then, to confirm that the scope of the mission of the LORD's servant is to the Gentiles throughout the world, and not simply to the Jews.

Isaiah 43:10 *"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. (ESV)*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

- In this context, then, the phrase *"you will be my witnesses"* should be seen as echoing or paralleling the frequent references to Isaiah's hearers in *their* role as the LORD's *"servant"* acting as *"witnesses"* to him (Isaiah 43:10, 12; 44:8).
- In Isaiah the role of *"witness"* is a fairly general one of being a witness to God, his reality, power, and ability to announce beforehand what he is going to do.
- In Acts the witness is more specifically to the career of Jesus and in particular his resurrection.
- The theme of witness is prominent throughout Acts, being applied to Peter and his colleagues and to Paul.

# References to the Disciples as Witnesses in the Book of Acts

- *So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us... one of these men must become with us a **witness** to his resurrection. (Act 1:21-22)*
- *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are **witnesses**. (Act 2:32)*
- *And with many other words [Peter] **bore witness** and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." (Act 2:40)*
- *... you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are **witnesses**. (Act 3:15)*
- *And we are **witnesses** to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. (Act 5:32)*
- *And we are **witnesses** of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree... (Act 10:39)*



# References to the Disciples as Witnesses in the Book of Acts

- *and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his **witnesses** to the people. (Acts 13:31)*
- *The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a **witness** for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. (Act 22:14-15)*
- *And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and **witness** to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you... (Act 26:15-16)*

# Next Time

For this year's Christmas Special I will be looking at Simeon and Anna in **Luke 2:22-39**

# Class Discussion Time



# Class Discussion Time

- Today we saw that in Isaiah the role of “*witness*” is a fairly general one of being a witness to God, his reality, power, and ability to announce beforehand what he is going to do.
- Whereas in the New Testament, we are commanded as a part of the Great Commission to go and “*witness*” to the nations of the world concerning the person and work of Christ:
  - *Go therefore and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (Mat 28:19-20)
  - *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will **be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**”* (Act 1:8)



# Class Discussion Time

- John Piper on his website makes this statement:
  - *The Old Testament religion was mainly a “come and see” religion, while the New Testament religion is mainly a “go and tell” religion. There was no Great Commission to go reach the nations in the Old Testament. God’s focus was on blessing Israel among the nations, so that the queen of the South came and had her breath taken away by Solomon’s wealth (1 Kings 10:4–5). God never said to Solomon, “Use your wealth to evangelize the nations,” but that is precisely what he says to us in the New Testament.*
- Do you agree with Piper’s statement?
- If so, do you see how this might explain the difference in the OT use of the word “*witness*” and the NT usage of that same word?
- Do you as a believer feel a responsibility to “*witness*” to others concerning Christ?