

July 13, 2012

Isaiah 41, 42, 43

Hey everyone! My name is Terry Ebers. I serve on staff here at Christ Community with the High School Ministry and I'm excited to join you for the next few days of accelerators! I hope these accelerators have been a source of encouragement to you and have deepened your understanding of God's Word as you've been reading through the Bible this year!

Well, today is July 13th and we read out of chapters 41, 42, & 43 of Isaiah. We were introduced to the first of a series of passages in the book of Isaiah that have come to be known as the "servant songs." And these "songs" are simply passages in scripture that point us to the coming Messiah...the servant of God who will lay down His life for the sins of man.

Now, we've previously heard phrases in the book of Isaiah that have to do with a servant. But starting in chapter 42, the description of "the servant of the Lord" is very different from the description we saw yesterday, which clearly was meant to refer to the nation of Israel.

Listen again while I read the first servant song of Isaiah 42..."Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."

Most theologians have concluded that God is not talking about a nation here, but rather an individual person, the Messiah. And it's very clear that the New Testament writers understood that the "servant" of Isaiah's songs was Jesus. In the book of Mark, God spoke from heaven on the day when Christ was baptized. He said, "This is my son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." That appears to be a combination of Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42:1 – the first verse of the servant song we read today.

In addition, Jesus alluded to the servant songs more than once in the course of His ministry. You may be familiar with the story of James and John in the New Testament. They asked for the privilege of sitting on either side of Jesus when He was in His glory. And they, perhaps, did not understand Jesus' answer: He responded, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" Jesus was thinking ahead to the cup of God's wrath, which He would have to drink, to the baptism of death, which He would have to undergo. The servant prophecies were in His mind.

And then came the decisive statement. Matthew 20:28 says, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." This is the last servant song in a nutshell.

The point is this. Jesus found the blueprint for His mission in the servant songs of Isaiah. From them Jesus learned that He would have to suffer for us; that He would die for us, as though He were a criminal, under the weight of our sins.

The last night thing I want to talk about today comes from some of my favorite verses in Isaiah, found at the beginning of chapter 43. It says this... "But now this is what the Lord says -- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.'"

Interestingly, just two generations later, Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego boldly defied King Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship the image of gold. And the consequence of their disobedience to the king was a fiery furnace into which they were thrown. But if you remember how the story goes... God protected them and did not let the flames hurt them. I wonder if these passages of Scripture from Isaiah 43 were echoing through their minds that day? I wonder if they were quoting these precious promises -- promises that were kept that day by God. They were not alone, and they were not burned!

Similarly, our own circumstances in life can seem overwhelming at times. Maybe you're in a place today where water is surrounding you and you're not sure how much longer you can hold on until it sweeps over your head. Maybe you feel like you're walking through fire and the pain you're experiencing is real and intense. Well God says that we don't have to fear, because we belong to the Lord, and He is with us. Isaiah 43:3 says, "For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

As the servant songs in Isaiah point us to Jesus, we are reminded that we have a SAVIOR! Our God saves us from death and destruction through the blood of Christ, and that is good news!

Well, no matter where you're at today, may you cling to the promise that God is with you and He is the one who saves! Have a great day!