

Review

Chapter 40 of Isaiah began a new section of Isaiah with God saying, "comfort My people." The chapter ended with the promise that God doesn't get tired, and those of us who do get tired can gain new strength by waiting for the Lord.

41:1 Let Them Come Forward

God tells the nations of the world to be quiet and listen to Him. There is going to be a trial, where they will be allowed to give explanation of themselves. But when you're going to go head-to-head with God, you'd better be at full strength, so He tells the people to gain new strength. Of course they won't be able to, since they are waiting upon their idols, which have nothing to give them.

41:2-4 One From The East

There is a man who is described as coming from the east and subduing kings. I have heard and read lots of ideas about who he is.

- Some say God is pointing into the past towards Abraham. The only reasons I can see for coming to that conclusion are:

1) that he is described as righteous, as Abraham was in Gen. 15:6, and;

2) Abraham is mentioned down in verse eight, though in a different context.

- Some say God is pointing into the far future towards Jesus Christ. This seems to be a much better possibility.

- However, most commentators seem to conclude that God is pointing into the near future, when the Babylonian captivity will end because of Cyrus, the king of Persia. We will discuss him at greater length when God prophetically calls him by name in chapters 44 and 45.

For now, it is probably best to simply say, "God is telling the nations that they will fall before His chosen deliverer."

41:5-7 Be Strong

When that deliverer, whoever he might be, is on his way, the nations will tremble. They will try to strengthen each other, and form alliances.

They will also work hard at pleasing their gods by making more and better idols.

41:8-10 I Have Not Rejected You

After threatening the other nations, God turns gently to Israel and reassures them of His love. He reminds them that He has chosen them, and that they are descendants of Abraham, the friend of God (James 2:23).

He tells them that although they have been scattered, they will be regathered. God has not rejected them, and He is with them. He will strengthen, help, and uphold them.

It is really discouraging to see how many Christian denominations today teach that God has rejected Israel. They say the Jews rejected Jesus, so God rejected the Jews. But that is contrary to so many of the unconditional promises God made to them.

It is also contrary to clear New Testament doctrine. Paul makes clear in Romans 11,

Rom. 11:1-2 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! ... God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.

Remember, Paul wrote this AFTER the Jews had rejected Jesus and demanded His crucifixion.

As a matter of fact, if you trace Catholics' and Protestant denominations' current doctrine of the Jews being rejected, you will see that it stems directly from the anti-Semitism throughout Europe during the Reformation, and the Catholics' persecution of them even earlier. We discussed this at length in our study of the History & Future of the World #'s 26 through 32.

But it is a dangerous thing to reject those whom God has not rejected...

41:11-16 Those Who Contend With You

God tells Israel what the nations who hate them can expect: they will be shamed and dishonored. They will perish, because God is on their side.

Gen. 12:1-3 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

The only condition was that Abram go to the land, which he did. The condition was met, and the promise is in effect this day and forever. As a matter of fact, when the Great Tribulation is over, Jesus said,

Matt. 25:32-34 “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

Matt. 25:41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels’”

When those who are allowed to enter the Millennial Kingdom and those who are sent to the lake of fire ask what criteria God used to judge them, they will be told,

Matt. 25:40 ...“Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.”

The future of each nation will hinge on how they treated the brethren of Jesus - the Jews.

41:17-20 Israel's Water And Trees Prophesied

Isaiah tells us that the Lord promises to do something amazing - opening rivers on the bare heights for the afflicted and needy who look for water, and that trees will flourish in the land.

Many commentaries will use this opportunity to point out that since the Jews have returned to the land of Israel, the nation has be-

come an exporter of fruits, vegetables, and flowers. At its peak, it exported these items at the value of a billion dollars a year! (Today, because they focus more on hi-tech industrial exports which are far more profitable, it is less than that.)

There are also now countless trees growing and prospering throughout the nation, which have been planted over the last century.

These facts border on the miraculous when you consider that most of the natural vegetation in Israel had disappeared or had been destroyed by the time the Jews began returning in the late 1800's. The area was basically a wasteland of sand, mountainous rocks, and swamps.

Many people point to these facts and claim that this prophecy has been completely fulfilled. But the reality is that Israel is once again in a water crisis. The supply from its three main water sources (Lake Kinneret, and the mountain and coastal aquifers) is shrinking. Ecosystems and water quality are suffering.

I believe that the complete fulfillment of this promised prophecy will be when Jesus establishes His kingdom on the earth, and streams of water flow from the Holy City:

Zech. 14:8-9 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth...

Calvary's Water And Trees Prophesied

Interestingly for me, about eleven years ago, these very verses were given to us in a word of prophecy regarding the planting of this Calvary Chapel in Cheyenne.

Looking back on them, it is fascinating to see that the Lord allowed and inspired us to purchase these 20 acres of barren land, without a single tree or source of water upon it.

Our property manager told me a couple weeks ago that there are now 321 trees on our land. Water is flowing to them, not to mention the wonderful water feature in front of the coffee shop. Also, by next summer we will have one of Cheyenne's largest waterfalls finished. (That's what

the huge mound of dirt is out front.)

But before we even arrived, Judy and I knew that this prophecy was given to us personally to be about much more than physical water and trees. We knew that there was a spiritual application to these verses.

You see, water in the Scriptures is symbolic of God's Word. Paul described in Ephesians,

Eph. 5:26 ...The washing of water with the Word...

Trees are also indicative of people who grow spiritually. Psalm 1 is a good example of both principles, describing that the man who meditates on the Word of God will be like a tree planted by streams of water:

Psa. 1:1-3 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

We believed that God was telling us that there were many people in Cheyenne thirsting for the Word of God, and not finding it. We believed that coming here and simply teaching the Word of God simply would begin to not only satisfy their thirst, but grow them up to be strong and stable trees, made alive by the living water of the Word.

We also knew that God would receive the credit for all of this. I don't believe that anyone can look at my education, my personality, my speaking ability, etc. and come to any conclusion except, "God is working supernaturally through His Word, 'cause it sure ain't Ron!"

I am thankful to God for planting this church.

I am thankful to God for His living Word.

And I am thankful for you who have spiritually prospered and grown, and have begun to plant seeds in others' lives that will be watered by the Word as well.