

*Is. 43:8 ¶ Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, And the deaf, even though they have ears.*

Even though the Hebrew people were spiritually *blind* and *deaf* in Isaiah's day, and failed to believe what the prophets had prophesied, at least they knew what the prophets had stated. It was for this reason that the Jews were to be assembled for the purpose of proclaiming what the prophets had spoken; even though, overall, they did not understand nor abide by the prophets' words. As we look at history past, this haphazard approach toward God's prophetic word has prevailed within the nation. (The notes associated with Isaiah 53 have much to say about the subject.) Nevertheless, they continue to proclaim the prophetic word even though overall they do so from an improper perspective. Therefore, even though God realized that the Jews would generally fail to understand the words of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and etc., the Hebrew people have served as His mouthpiece through which the prophetic word has been voiced to the Gentiles. It is obvious that an abundance of Gentiles have come to see and understand from the prophets what the majority of Jews have never seen nor understood—that Jesus truly is Messiah! A time will come when this will change; for at the end of the Tribulation the entire Jewish nation (all Jews on the earth at that time) will recognize that Isaiah 53 points to Christ and accept Him as Savior. At this same time, they will properly understand all the prophets' words and greatly enjoy them throughout eternity.

The spiritual ineptitude in Isaiah's day was due to idolatry (the worship of Gentile idols), a problem that would handicap the Jews until the Babylonian captivity. When they were released from Babylon, it was undeniable that their prophets had been correct in predicting deliverance through Cyrus of Persia. For sure, no Babylonian idol (nor any other Gentile idol) had anything to say concerning the matter. They were totally silent. This release from Babylon transpired approximately 150 years after Isaiah's ministry; so the Jews, as God's witnesses, could proclaim that it was Jehovah alone who had brought deliverance. An intriguing thing happened, however. Even though God delivered Israel from Babylon exactly as His prophets had predicted, and the Hebrew people believed and proclaimed that to be the case, they fell into sin soon after returning to their homeland. History gives an accurate record of the horrible consequences the Jews have reaped from such unfaithfulness. This waywardness (and involvement with idolatry) will continue until the end of the Tribulation when they, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will view the prophetic word from a proper perspective and accept Christ as Messiah. This backdrop is mandatory if we are to correctly interpret the remaining verses in Isaiah 43.

*Is. 43:9 All the nations have gathered together In order that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this And proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified, Or let them hear and say, "It is true."*

*All the Gentile nations are gathered and asked to present...witnesses* who can prove that the worship of idols is justifiable. If such idols are legitimate, maybe they can at least explain the meaning of past events, since they, for certain, cannot predict that which will transpire in the future. Had they been capable of doing so, they would have spoken beforehand of the Jews' captivity in Babylon and subsequent release through Cyrus of Persia. The God of the Hebrews not only predicts the future, but also explains the significance of the past (as well as defines the present). Therefore, Jehovah is greater than any Gentile idol. This is Isaiah's point in verses 8-13, and the Hebrew people needed to take heed. It is amazing how often the Jews traded fellowship with Jehovah for the worship of a powerless, deaf, and speechless Gentile idol.

*Is. 43:10 "You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And My servant whom I have chosen, In order that you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no*

*God formed, And there will be none after Me.*

The assembled Hebrew nation (*people*) of verse 8, God's *servant* (v.10), is called upon to serve as God's *witnesses*. Why? As a nation they will (subsequent to Isaiah's death) observe the fulfillment of God's prophecies relating to Israel's return from Babylon—even though they did not believe the prophecies when they were originally stated. They can say to the *gathered* Gentiles of verse 9 that Jehovah, the *God* of Israel, not only predicted what transpired but also explained the significance of each of the events—making Him the only true *God*. It will help the Jews to verbalize this to the Gentile nations, for in most cases the Hebrew people had opted out for idolatry rather than faith in the *God* of the prophets. It was not until the Babylonian captivity (which occurred after Isaiah's death) that they began to recognize their need to discard Gentile idolatry. When they experience the fulfillment of God's prophecies relating to their seventy years of captivity, as well as their deliverance from Babylon through *Cyrus* (a Persian ruler spoken of by Isaiah some 150 years previous to his reign—Isaiah 44:28; 45:1), they will serve as capable *witnesses* indeed. The Jews of today are capable *witnesses* as well. Even though they misunderstand many of prophets' words, especially those relating to Christ, they are at least messengers of these words to the Gentiles.

According to Isaiah 43:10, the Jews are God's *witnesses*..., *chosen* as a *servant* for a purpose. (For more input relating to the word "*chosen*," read the notes associated with Isaiah 42:1). The purpose is, "*In order that you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me.*" This confirms that the Jews were to bear witness to the fact that the *God* of the Jews is the only *God*. They were to communicate to the Gentiles that no *God* was *formed* before Jehovah (He has always existed), nor has any God been formed during His existence. The Jews understood this to a great degree when they departed from Babylon, for they realized that no Gentile idol was responsible for their miraculous return to their homeland. Therefore, they believed and understood that it was Jehovah alone who had accomplished the work and that all Gentile idols are without merit. The nation will come to know the same at the end of the Tribulation, only to a much greater degree, even though they are a rebellious, idolatrous seeking people today.

*Is. 43:11 "I, even I, am the Lord; And there is no savior besides Me.*

The Jews were also to be witnesses to the fact that *no savior* exists *besides* Jehovah. Note the number of times the Lord verbalizes this fact in Isaiah 43-46 (43:11; 44:6, 8, 45:5, 6, 14, 21, 22; 46:9). Jehovah alone is *savior*, and it was deliverance from Babylon through *Cyrus*, as predicted by Isaiah, that finally convinced Israel of this truth. None of the Gentile idols that the Jews had previously worshipped could have so convincingly brought deliverance as did the God of the Jews. Keep in mind, however, that even though the Jews recognized who had brought them back from Babylon, they will not be spiritually regenerated as a nation until the end of the Tribulation. Much disobedience will occur among the Hebrew people between their return from Babylon and the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation.

*Is. 43:12 "It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "And I am God.*

Jehovah again confirms that the Hebrew people, as His *witnesses*, can attest to the fact that what He had prophesied had come to pass (even though they initially resisted His messengers who brought forth the prophecies). *God* stated to the nation that it *was no strange god* who had predicted their captivity and orchestrated their return. He alone did it; therefore, He alone is *God* and worthy of their worship.

*Is. 43:13 "Even from eternity I am He; And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?"*

The Jews, as witnesses, could also confirm that nothing possesses the power to overthrow Jehovah or *reverse* His course of action (even with man possessing a free will). Therefore, He alone is capable of predicting the future and fulfilling what He has foretold. He proved this very vividly through the Babylonian captivity. Therefore, all idols are worthless.

*Is. 43:14 ¶ Thus says the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "For your sake I have sent to Babylon, And will bring them all down as fugitives, Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.*

Jehovah, who is *the Holy One of Israel*, their *Redeemer*, pronounces judgment on the Babylonians in verses 14-21, a judgment that will be administered by the Medo-Persian Empire. This judgment will come, "*For your sake*" (for Israel's sake). Why? *Israel* will have been in captivity for *seventy years*, just as Jeremiah has prophesied (Jeremiah 25:11), and it will be time for the Jews to return to their homeland.

Babylon, located on the Euphrates River, was a city of great wealth due to her shipping industry. The Euphrates was joined to the Tigris by a canal called Naharmalca, or the Royal River, which allowed Babylonian ships to travel north. There was no problem navigating to the south because the Euphrates emptied into the Persian Gulf. As a result, Babylonian shipping generated much wealth for the empire and became a great source of pride. The Babylonians will travel as fugitives on these ships when overthrown by the Persians.

Note: Commerce along the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers ceased when the Persians overthrew the Babylonians. This was due to two major factors: 1-the rerouting of the waters of the Euphrates, 2-a series of dams constructed to prevent navigation. (The Persians aborted these waterways for defensive purposes— to avoid a future revolt or invasion.) Alexander the Great (of the Hellenistic Empire) attempted to restore navigation along these waters, but died before the project could be completed.

*Is. 43:15 "I am the Lord, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King."*

The Babylonians would be judged by *the Lord* (Jehovah), who is the covenant keeper. He is also *Holy*,...*The Creator of Israel*, and their *King*. As the *Holy* covenant keeper, *Creator*, and *King*, He will see to it that Babylon is judged due to her cruel treatment of the Jews.

*Is. 43:16 Thus says the Lord, Who makes a way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters,*

In verses 16-17, Isaiah addresses Israel's deliverance from Egypt, an event that transpired much earlier in the nation's history. Jehovah made *a way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters* by dividing the waters of the Red Sea as Israel fled from Egypt in the book of Exodus.

*Is. 43:17 Who brings forth the chariot and the horse, The army and the mighty man (They will lie down together and not rise again; They have been quenched and extinguished like a wick):*

In the process of Israel's exodus from Egypt, the waters of the Red Sea were used of the Lord to

destroy the Egyptian chariots and horses, along with their armies.

*Is. 43:18 "Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past.*

God classifies the events described in verses 16-17 as *former things* as well as *things of the past*. The nation is not to *call to mind* nor *ponder* such things, for, according to verse 19, *new things* were coming.

*Is. 43:19 "Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert.*

God speaks very much in the next few chapters concerning His ability to predict the future as well as to bring about that which is *new*. The "*new*" that will occur in this instance is deliverance from Babylon in 536 BC—after Israel's seventy years of captivity. God will *make a roadway in the wilderness* as well as *Rivers in the desert* to assure safe passage for the Jews returning from Babylon.

*Is. 43:20 "The beasts of the field will glorify Me; The jackals and the ostriches; Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people.*

As water is supernaturally supplied on Israel's return trip home, *The beasts of the field*, as well as *The jackals and the ostriches...*, will glorify the Lord. Why? The water that supplies Israel's needs will also supply the needs of these desert creatures. For more input relating to the word "*chosen*," and how it relates to the Jews being God's *chosen people*, read the notes associated with Isaiah 42:1.

*Is. 43:21 "The people whom I formed for Myself, Will declare My praise.*

The nation of Israel, whom the Lord *formed* for Himself, will also *praise* Him as they return from Babylon. They will not obey Him as they should once they arrive in their homeland; but at least they will understand, know, and recognize that it was Jehovah alone who had freed them from captivity—not some Gentile idol. In this manner they could bring *praise* to the Lord, but it will be the end of the Tribulation before they will fulfill what God has purposed for the nation since her inception. Jehovah's original intent for Israel was that she walk in obedience as she took the news of Himself to the Gentiles. Instead, she worshipped the gods of the Gentiles, failed to take God's truth to the nations, and brought shame to His name (the notes associated with Isaiah 61:6 tie in well here). The end of the Tribulation will come before she will be spiritually regenerated as a nation and fulfill her original calling—that of walking in uninterrupted obedience while sharing God's truth with the Gentiles.

*Is. 43:22 ¶ "Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob; But you have become weary of Me, O Israel.*

Remember that Isaiah is prophesying of events that will transpire after his death—while the Jews are in captivity in Babylon. The Jews would not only fail to call *on* the Lord while in Babylon, but would *become weary of* Him as well.

*Is. 43:23 "You have not brought to Me the sheep of your burnt offerings; Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, Nor wearied you with incense.*

The Jews would fail to bring *sacrifices* and *offerings* to the Lord while in Babylon.

*Is. 43:24 "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, Neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices; Rather you have burdened Me with your sins, You have wearied Me with your iniquities.*

Isaiah again, as in verse 23, emphasizes that Israel would fail to present *sacrifices* to Jehovah while in Babylon. In fact, the sin of the nation would become exceedingly burdensome to the Lord.

Obviously, it was not righteous behavior on Israel's part that would cause God to free her from Babylon. It was His unconditional promises to the nation that would bring about her release. Jehovah had promised to *bless* those who blessed Israel and *curse* those who cursed Israel (Genesis 12:3). Therefore, it was His covenants with the Hebrew people, along with His love for the nation, that would move Him bring Israel home after a seventy year absence. This is the subject of verses 25-28, which we will study next.

*Is. 43:25 ¶ "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.*

It has always been for God's *own sake*, not obedience on Israel's part (for there has been so little of it), that has caused Him to respond so graciously to the nation. In fact, at the end of the Tribulation, and in conjunction with Israel's repentance and spiritual regeneration, God will view the nation as transgression free and sinless. Wow!

*Is. 43:26 "Put Me in remembrance; let us argue our case together, State your cause, that you may be proved right.*

Israel was to *argue her case*, that is, give reasons as to why God should deal favorably with her. The Lord knew that no justification could be presented based upon righteous behavior on her part.

*Is. 43:27 "Your first forefather sinned, And your spokesmen have transgressed against Me.*

The *first forefather* of Israel was *Jacob*, whose name was changed to *Israel* in Genesis 32:28. He *sinned*, and the nation that came forth from him has *sinned* as well. One of the main reasons for Israel's disobedience has been the transgression of their *spokesmen* (teachers), whose unwise instruction has resulted in immeasurable consequence for the nation. This leadership crisis, which occurred in Old and New Testament times, continues day. It will remain until the end of the Tribulation, when the leadership of the nation realizes its error, accepts Christ as Messiah, and calls Him back (Matthew 23:39).

*Is. 43:28 "So I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary; And I will consign Jacob to the ban, and Israel to revilement.*

The corrupt *princes* (priests) *of the sanctuary* (temple), whose responsibility it was to teach the people, would pay dearly when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. The descendants of *Jacob* (Israel) experienced *revilement* for seventy years in Babylon as a result of this less than adequate leadership (I could have used more forceful adjectives in describing these worthless leaders of the nation, but I restrained myself).

Outside of God's faithfulness to His covenants and love for the nation, it is obvious that no good reason existed for Jehovah to deal favorably with Israel by allowing her to return from Babylon. There is no doubt that God's description of Himself in Exodus 34:6-7 is absolute fact!

#### **Isaiah 44**

Verses 1-3a of this chapter address Israel's return from Babylon in 536 BC, while verses 3b-5 relate to the future regeneration of the nation at the end of the Tribulation. Therefore, Isaiah 44:1-5 and Isaiah 43 address some of the same subjects; so you might want to tie the two chapters together.

*Is. 44:1 "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant; And Israel, whom I have chosen:*

God encourages *Jacob* (Israel), God's *servant*, who is *chosen*, to *listen* to His words. The nation was not *chosen* for salvation, but rather to be a kingdom of priests as well as the nation through whom the Messiah would be born (the notes associated with Isaiah 42:1 address this subject in greater detail).

*Is. 44:2 Thus says the Lord who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.*

*Jeshurun* is “Yeshurun” in Hebrew. It means “the dear upright people,” or “the upright one,” and is a poetic name for Israel, a name of endearment. It is used elsewhere, but only in the book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 32:15; 33:5, 26). Due to God’s love for Israel, He established covenants with the nation that will protect her from extinction. It is interesting that the Palestinian Covenant, a covenant that guarantees the eventual return of the Jews to their land in a state of belief, is located in Deuteronomy 30:1-3—the book in which *Jeshurun* is used the most.

There is no doubt that God brought Israel out of Babylon as a result of the covenants He had established with the nation. Therefore, as a result of His covenants, He could not allow her to remain in Babylon and eventually cease to exist. Consider this: He allowed her to return knowing full well that she would rebel soon afterwards.

*Is. 44:3 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, And My blessing on your descendants;*

The American Standard Version renders the first half of this verse as follows:

***‘For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground;***

This points to the return from Babylon in 536 BC (read Isaiah 43:19 to see the parallel). The last half of the verse, beginning with, “*I will pour out my Spirit,*” points to the future, when all the Jews (on earth) at the end of the Tribulation will accept Jesus as Messiah and be spiritually regenerated. Verses such as Joel 2:28-29 and Zechariah 12:10 also address this same subject. The reason we can know that the last half of Isaiah 44:3 points to the end-times, and not the return from Babylon, is the phrase, “*on your descendants.*” Therefore, the *Spirit* will be poured out...on the *descendants* of those who return from Babylon, an event that will occur in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ. It is after this national regeneration of the nation that the Jews will be regathered from throughout the world to enjoy the benefits of the Messianic Kingdom. This regathering is described in much detail in Isaiah 11:12 and 14:1-2; so a quick read of those notes might be helpful.

*Is. 44:4 And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.’*

The Jews will greatly increase numerically once they are regathered and enter into the Millennium.

*Is. 44:5 "This one will say, 'I am the Lord's'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to the Lord,' And will name Israel's name with honor.*

This verse is rendered as follows in the American Standard Version:

***One shall say, I am Jehovah's; and another shall call (himself) by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto Jehovah, and surname (himself) by the name of Israel.***

The nation of Israel will be honored among the Gentiles once the Jews experience their national regeneration (also read Zechariah 8:22-23). In fact, the Gentiles will go so far as to change their

names to Jewish names, the opposite of what has happened in the past (read Daniel 1:7). This will be due to the Gentiles' love for Jehovah, the God of the Jews.