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## ISAIAH 41:17-20

### INTRODUCTION

We come this morning to Isaiah 41:17-20.

Here, God through His prophet, continues to yet again comfort and encourage His people.

At the beginning of our present chapter in verses 1-4 God summons the nations and proves to them that He is not just the God of Israel, not simply a tribal god and limited to a particular geographic area, rather, He is the God of all the world and of all nations in it. In these opening verses of chapter 41 God proclaims Himself to be the one who has raised up Cyrus and Persia to go forth conquering the nations. And in that it was Persia and not Israel, and Cyrus not a king in Israel, and that He was giving the nations to him, God demonstrates that He is the God of all the earth, nations, and leaders.

But as well in these opening verses of chapter 41 God proclaims His commitment to His people, to Israel. He displays in the raising up of Cyrus and Persia, His use of them to defeat Babylon, and deliver Israel from their 70-year Babylonian Captivity, that He is orchestrating history for the benefit of His people.

You will remember we emphasized five observational points from these opening verses.

1. God is the God of all the earth, nations, and leaders.
2. God is orchestrating history for the benefit of His people.
3. God is doing for His people WHAT they cannot do for themselves.
4. God is doing for His people in a WAY they do not anticipate.
5. God is helping His people at a time WHEN they are not expecting it.

After verses 1-4, in verses 5-13, God encourages His people by contrasting the INSECURITY OF THE WORLD with the SECURITY that belongs to them. He shows that the SECURITY OF HIS PEOPLE is ROOTED in -

1. His SOVEREIGN ELECTION OF THEM.
2. His HISTORY with them.
3. His GRACE and not their merit.
4. His PROMISES to them.
5. His PROMISED DESTRUCTION of their enemies.

Then in verses 14-16, God further comforts and encourages His people by CONTRASTING THEIR PRESENT REALITY with THEIR FUTURE REALITY. In these verses God –

1. Speaks to the REALITY of their PRESENT.
2. Speaks of the REGARD He has for them in their PRESENT STATE.
3. Speaks of the RELATION that He has with them even in their PRESENT CONDITION.

4. REMINDS them of their FUTURE STATE of BLESSEDNESS.
5. REVEALS to them through Isaiah where their true and lasting, enduring joy is to be found.

This brings us to present text, verses 17-20, and here God, as He has been doing, again speaks through His prophet to encourage His people.

#### TEXT

**WHEN THE POOR AND NEEDY SEEK WATER, AND *THERE IS NONE*, AND THEIR TONGUE FAILETH FOR THIRST, I THE LORD WILL HEAR THEM, I THE GOD OF ISRAEL WILL NOT FORSAKE THEM.**

**I WILL OPEN RIVERS IN HIGH PLACES, AND FOUNTAINS IN THE MIDST OF THE VALLEYS: I WILL MAKE THE WILDERNESS A POOL OF WATER, AND THE DRY LAND SPRINGS OF WATER.**

**I WILL PLANT IN THE WILDERNESS THE CEDAR, THE SHITTAH TREE, AND THE MYRTLE, AND THE OIL TREE; I WILL SET IN THE DESERT THE FIR TREE, *AND THE PINE*, AND THE BOX TREE TOGETHER:**

**THAT THEY MAY SEE, AND KNOW AND CONSIDER, AND UNDERSTAND TOGETHER, THAT THE HAND OF THE LORD HATH DONE THIS, AND THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL HATH CREATED IT."**

In a very general sense observe the following with respect to our text.

In verse 17 Isaiah is again stating WHAT the condition of the people of God in Babylon is. He describes them as **"THE POOR AND NEEDY."** In those words, **"THE POOR AND NEEDY,"** Isaiah is referring to those who are the lowest and weakest in society. These words and this description express the same thought as the term **"WORM"** in verse 14. The prophet is again speaking of the PRESENT REALITY of the people of God in Babylon. HISTORICALLY, materially and spiritually, Israel was in a state of poverty and affliction in Babylon.

Isaiah then pictorially expresses the EXTREMITY of their need in the words, **"WHEN THE POOR AND NEEDY SEEK WATER AND *THERE IS NONE*"** and **"THEIR TONGUE FAILETH FOR THIRST,"** The need for water is man's most BASIC need. When Isaiah pictures the need of the people as being that of water and when he does so twice, he is expressing the EXTREMITY OF THEIR NEED. IT COULD NOT BE GREATER!!!

What Israel did in response to this time of extreme suffering and need Isaiah tells us by way of implication. He implies they cried out to the Lord. This is seen in the words, **"I THE LORD WILL HEAR THEM."** That the Lord will hear them implies they are crying out to Him. In response to His people's prayers God declares two things, 1) That He will hear them, **"I THE LORD WILL HEAR THEM,"** and 2) that He will not forsake them, **"I THE GOD OF ISRAEL WILL NOT FORSAKE THEM."**

In verses 18 and 19 Isaiah declares the WAY God is going to answer the prayers of His people.

In verse 18 Isaiah declares God will introduce a COMPLETE REVERSAL of their present condition. There will be rivers in high places, fountains in the midst of valleys, the wilderness will become a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. God is going to completely reverse what is their present reality.

Indeed, He is going to create what in effect is a whole NEW REALITY. He is going to create what does not exist. The change and picture Isaiah presents is one of such RADICALNESS that it calls attention to and highlights what is the SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER of the work that God is about to perform.

In verse 19 Isaiah further declares the DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL NATURE of the work about to be performed in that he ascribes a SEVENFOLD GLORY to it. This is seen in the SEVEN TYPES of trees that he mentions. In this Isaiah declares not only the DIVINE NATURE of the work about to be performed but as well the FULNESS of that work, the completeness of it. This FULNESS is also seen in that the blessing described is pictured as that of WATER and TREES. The PRESENCE of WATER and TREES point backward to the reality of the Garden of Eden, and forward to the reality of the New Jerusalem and the BLESSEDNESS of both.

In verse 20 Isaiah declares WHY God is going to act on behalf of His people in the manner that He is. It is in order that it will be CLEARLY SEEN AND UNDENIABLY KNOWN THAT HE WHO IS THE GOD OF ISRAEL IS THE TRUE GOD AND THAT IT IS HE WHO HAS CREATED THIS NEW REALITY.

What Isaiah is speaking of here in regard to the WORK OF GOD on behalf of His people has to do with both His salvation of them from Babylon and His greater salvation of them later in Christ. Both are in view here. And in both the SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER AND NATURE OF THE WORK PERFORMED IS BEING EMPHASIZED. AND IN BOTH THAT IT IS THE WORK OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL AND THAT HE ALONE IS THE TRUE GOD IS CLEARLY AND UNDENIABLY DECLARED. AND IT IS THIS THAT IS GOD'S GREAT MESSAGE IN THESE TWO GREAT WORKS OF SALVATION ON BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE.

There is SO MUCH MORE to be said concerning both, and these things will be said as we go further in these final chapters of the book of Isaiah.

But this morning I want us to consider THE MESSAGE we see in these words of Isaiah that speak PERSONALLY TO US AS REGARDS OUR SALVATION IN CHRIST. In these words of the prophet what is the PARTICULAR MESSAGE GOD IS PROCLAIMING TO US CONCERNING HIS SALVATION OF US?

### MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

As I just stated the GENERAL and GREAT MESSAGE of our TEXT is that the GOD OF ISRAEL IS THE TRUE GOD, AND THAT SALVATION IS HIS DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL WORK.

But God here also speaks in a more PARTICULAR and PERSONAL SENSE concerning His salvation of His people. And it is this I want us to now consider.

FIRST, God would have us to RECOGNIZE in respect to His salvation our FRAILITY. That we are **“THE POOR AND NEEDY.”** That we are the poor and needy who **“SEEK WATER AND THERE IS NONE,”** and as a consequence whose **“TONGUE FAILETH FOR THIRST.”** Like Israel in Babylon, in our frailty we cannot help ourselves, we cannot save ourselves, we cannot extricate ourselves from the condition in which we find ourselves.

There is a GENERAL HELPLESSNESS which is man's. A helplessness which extends to the whole of our existence. In life in general we have a dependence on God that we most often do not recognize nor live

in consideration of. This is what our Lord was speaking of in Matthew 4:4 and James in James 4:13-15, and what Paul was implying in I Corinthians 4:7.

There is also a SPIRITUAL HELPLESNESS which man has. Scripture speaks of us as being dead in trespasses and sin by which is meant we are dead spiritually. As when a man is dead physically, he can do nothing in a physical sense, so when one is dead spiritually, he can do nothing in a spiritual sense. This is Paul's point. This is also what Paul is speaking of in Romans 8:7-8 and I Corinthians 2:14.

But there is also both a GENERAL and SPIRITUAL frailty and dependence THE SAINTS HAVE UNIQUELY in respect to God. And this is what Isaiah was specifically speaking to in our text. This is also what Paul was specifically referring to in I Corinthians 4:7, and what he is speaking of in Romans 12:3. This is also where we find ourselves WHEN like the Israelites in Babylon, we are in a time of chastisement and correction.

May we TRULY recognize our frailty and our dependence upon God, GENERALLY, SPIRITUALLY, AND UNIQUELY as His people. WE ARE TRULY AND WHOLLY, MATERIALLY AND SPIRITUALLY, DEPENDENT UPON GOD.

SECOND, God would have us to RECOGNIZE HIS FAITHFULNESS to us in His salvation of us. It is this that Isaiah is most emphasizing in our text. When we call upon Him, He will answer, **"I THE LORD WILL HEAR THEM."** There is never a time that God does not hear His people when they pray. And how Scripture comforts and encourages us in respect to this. Our Lord teaches this in Matthew 6:6-8, 7:7-11, Luke 11:1-13, and in so many other places in the Gospels. As well this is what Paul is speaking to in Ephesians 3:20, 6:18; Philippians 4:6-7 and I Thessalonians 5:17. This is also the encouragement of the apostle James in James 5:14-18, and the apostle John in I John 5:14-15. And respecting the faithfulness of God how often do we quote Romans 8:28, 32, I Corinthians 10:13, and Philippians 4:19.

THIRD, God would have us to RECOGNIZE the blessing of His FULNESS in His salvation of us. This is what is being expressed in verses 18 and 19. There is a RADICALNESS in the BLESSINGS GOD BESTOWS upon us in salvation. Verse 18 expressed this as a COMPLETE REVERSAL of the Israelites present circumstances. God works in our lives even personally to bring forth what is nothing less than a NEW CREATION, a COMPLETE REVERSAL or ENTIRELY NEW REALITY to our present circumstances. And in verse 19 Isaiah ascribed a SEVEN-FOLD GLORY to the work of God on behalf of His people, by which He was intimating the SUPERNATURALNESS of that work on their behalf. This is what Paul is referring to in Ephesians 3:20 and 6:10. We are intended to see the SUPERNATURALNESS OF GOD EXERCISED IN OUR BEHALF, AND THAT INWARDLY AND OUTWARDLY, AND INCREASINGLY!!!

FOURTH and finally, God would have us to RECOGNIZE HIS FINISH with respect to us. What the ULTIMATE END and PURPOSE of His work in our behalf is. This is what Isaiah is speaking of in verse 20. And it is this, that WE might see, and OTHERS might see, HIM in ALL that is done. That there is NO OTHER EXPLANATION for the MAGNITUDE OF WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE IN US, WITH US, AND FOR US. The problem with modern Christianity is that it only thinks of this type of work of God in terms of stuff. And sometimes it does indeed include stuff, actually, it often will include stuff in one form or another, BUT MOST OFTEN IT IS THE TRANSFORMATION HE BRINGS TO US, IN US, THAT OTHERS OBSERVE WITH UTTER AMAZEMENT, AND ASK HOW CAN IT BE?

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion this morning I ask, 'What do you personally know of all this, how have you experienced it?' Oh, the GLORY that belongs to the working of God in the lives of His people. There is nothing in the whole of life comparable to this. Saint, will you cry to God to give you more of Him than you presently have, to be more visibly powerful for you and in you?

You who have yet to come to Christ for salvation, for life, is He dealing with you this morning, has He come to you in this time, do you sense Him at work with you? There is nothing more glorious, and if you are not now sensible of His work would you cry out to Him concerning it, would you ask Him to not pass you by, but to do for you that He has done for others. Would you call to Him to so greatly work for you in the manner of which I have spoken this morning. Again, there is nothing greater or more glorious in all of life and existence than this. Cry to Him to so save you, call out to Him, come to Him in repentance of your sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

LET US PRAY.