

“Inconvenient Spoofs” Isaiah 41:1-29

Context: Isaiah prophesizes the means and the end of the Jewish exile and captivity in Babylon as well as the return to the Promised Land. God’s call of Israel to repentance and eventual deliverance was found in chapter 40 and served as the prologue for the next 26 chapters. Chapters 41 to 66 reveal God’s choice of the Persian king Cyrus as His instrument to end the exile. Much of Isaiah’s prophecy provides exhortations of comfort and encouragement through signs that verify God’s plan of redemption. Chapter 41 is set in the trial law format of the day in which the nations are called to the bar to hear God’s judgment and present their case for defense.

Life Principle: Look for life and renewal in what once were places spiritually barren, and there you will find the working of God’s redemption (Is. 41:17-20).

1. Nations called to judgment – Isaiah 41:1-7

God calls the western nations, including Babylon, who allied themselves with King Croesus of Lydia, to gather in silence for His judgment. Cyrus, Persian King of the east, is revealed as God’s appointed servant for their judgment. Their handmade gods will not save them.

2. Israel called to courage – Isaiah 41:8-20

The weak gods of the nations provided no relief from the conquest of Cyrus - only fear and terror. In contrast, the Remnant is called to take strength in God’s election, covenant, and unchanging justice. Although the Remnant appears as insignificant as a worm, God declares that He will make good on His promise of their redemption. Further, God promises clear signs of life in order that His salvation will be rightly comprehended.

3. Nations called to their defense – Isaiah 41:21-29

Neither the nations nor their false gods can respond to the call of the Lord, the King of Jacob, to reveal their works, good or ill, past, present, or future. He promises the dispensation of His judgment through His servant and Messiah figure, Cyrus, in place of the silent bewilderment of the nations’ false prophets.

Study questions:

- Isaiah 41:4 reveals God as the sovereign architect of human history and identifies Him with the same descriptor used for Jesus Christ, “the first and last” (Revelation 1:17; 2:8). This concurs with our belief in Jesus as fully God (see footnote 5 ‘**On Jesus Christ**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org). In what sense are God the Father and Jesus “the first and the last” in these three verses?
- Scripture often uses apparent and subtle contrast to emphasize a principle. As a **Bible study method**, consider the contrasts and the specifics used in Isaiah 41:17-20. What is being compared and contrasted? How many trees are named in the renewal? What does that number signify? What countries might these trees represent? How do you apply your observations to the afflicted and needy of Isaiah 41:17, 9?
- Isaiah 41:23-28 calls to the prophets and counselors of the nations to show that they are gods by demonstrating the veracity of their prophecies past, present, or future. Weigh the primary data for and against the prophecies of ‘global warming’ to determine if they foresee the future accurately, while recalling Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:7ff and Revelation 21:1 (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Global_Warming_Swindle and <http://frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=23008>).

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Isaiah 41:20 in the context of verses 17-20. Ask God to open your eyes to His work of life in places that were spiritually barren. Is there someone who is fearful and anxious about God’s deliverance to whom you might bring His strengthening work of life? Selah!