

Isaiah – Chapter 41

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Theme: God comforted Israel after chastening by declaring supreme power and foresight to bring Cyrus.

Outline:

- 1 God Called the Nations to a Debate
- 2-4 God Chose Cyrus for the Debate Topic
- 5-7 God Mocked the Idolaters' Response
- 8-9 God Declared Personal Love for Israel
- 10-14 God Told Israel Not to Fear Enemies
- 15-16 God Promised New Power for Israel
- 17-20 God Promised Provision for Israel
- 21-24 God Mocked Idols' Foresight and Power
- 25-27 God Boasted of His Power and Foresight
- 28-29 God Mocked All Idolaters' Ignorance

Preparatory Reading: Psalm 126; Isaiah chapters 13-14; 26; 35; 44-45; Ezekiel 36-37; Daniel 9.

Related Links:

- 1. [Isaiah – Introduction](#) (outline).
- 2. [Exposition of Isaiah 13](#) (Babylon).
- 3. [Exposition of Isaiah 14](#) (Babylon).
- 4. [Exposition of Isaiah 21](#) (Babylon).
- 5. [Exposition of Isaiah 23](#) (Tyre helping).
- 6. [Exposition of Isaiah 26](#) (Babylon).
- 7. [Exposition of Isaiah 35](#) (Remnant riches).
- 8. [Babylon History / Prophecy](#).
- 9. [Boasting of God – Isaiah](#) (slides).
- 10. [Boasting of God – Job](#) (slides).
- 11. [Glory of Fulfilled Prophecy](#).
- 12. [Why I Believe the Bible](#) (sermons).
- 13. [Knowing God's Attributes](#) (outline).
- 14. [Cyrus Decree to Rebuild](#).

Introduction:

- A. Faith – the means of a good report to please God (Heb 11:2,6) – is increased by hearing (Rom 10:17).
 - 1. Faith – confidence or trust in God and His promises and precepts – is built by chapters like this.
 - 2. With proof of this God's existence and approval, men will do exploits (Daniel 11:32; Psalm 18:29).

3. Delight in God, which is more than faith, is built by chapters like this (Psalm 37:3-4; Jer 9:23-24).
- B. This will sound too simple or even trivial, but the outline above breaking down the chapter helps much.
1. There is much more than reading or even studying the words without seeing progression in lessons.
 2. Twenty-nine verses without division often result in confusion and/or contentment with sound bites.
 3. There are distinct sections and lessons in this chapter that greatly facilitate appreciating the verses.
- C. This chapter follows the previous with further details justifying the comfort for Israel after chastening.
1. After 39 chapters, many of which foretold terrible judgments, here is further comfort from God.
 2. From the first chapter to the historical section (36-39), Assyria and Babylon would ravage Judah.
 3. Assyria's war with Judah is emphasized for being in Isaiah's time, but Babylon's war is also told.
 4. But notice the very last prophecy before chapter 40 – Babylon would take all captive (Is 39:6-7).
 5. The comfort here extends to include God's power and superiority to other gods to truly help Judah.
 6. For those living under Isaiah knowing that Babylon was coming, they needed comfort and hope.
 7. For those living in Babylon, the situation seemed hopeless for the Jews under such a great enemy.
- D. We cannot exhaust every phrase or verse here more than other verses we covered in chapters 1-39.
1. What is the lesson of this incredibly beautiful chapter? What is its value for us beyond sound bites?
 2. There is a progression we want to admire. There are rhetorical questions we should never forget.
 3. The great lesson and value are to encourage yourself in His promises to save and supply His people.
 4. You are not more helpless or weak than the ragged remnant returning to Jerusalem from Babylon.
 5. The promises in this chapter are popular, memorized, and sung about. Learn and embrace them.
 6. Oh to be God's worm and have Him promise His help, His strength, and His upholding provision.
- E. This chapter is the second of the second half of the book also in a nine-chapter section of God boasting.
1. You have to enjoy these nine chapters if you truly love God and delight in Him and glorious power.
 2. This section of 216 verses are the largest section of the Bible where God boasts about Himself.
 3. The nine chapters use the first person singular I (96 times), my (42), me (33), mine (9), myself (4).
 4. It is how He reveals Himself, mocks false religion, rebukes doubters, to humbles and comfort us.
 5. For those that fear, love, and delight in God, these chapters are some of the finest reading of Him.
 6. **Boasting of God – Isaiah.**

God Called the Nations to a Debate – Verse 1

¹ ***Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.***

- A. Islands here are Gentile nations of idolaters (Is 11:11; 40:15; 42:10; 49:1; 60:9; 66:19).
- B. God told pagan Gentile idolaters to stop ordinary talking to prepare for a formal debate.
1. They were to be silent temporarily, for God in the verse soon called on them to talk.

2. Stop talking while I inform you of a contest to test your gods against me in a debate.
 3. Stop talking while you apply yourselves diligently to get strong reasons (Is 41:21).
 4. When you are fully prepared, not with usual nonsense, but your best, come see me.
 5. Let me moderate this debate between us, and I will speak of power and my foresight.
 6. He fairly laid out how the debate would proceed; He then next introduced the topic.
- C. You should love this language and the grand picture it creates – this is our glorious God.
1. Everyone knows how Elijah mocked Baal and his prophets, but this is God mocking.
 2. Since the world has imagined and invented gods, the true God likes to ridicule them.
 3. Why are there so few pulpits any more that will boldly preach such precious verses?
 4. Political correctness – the courtesy to not mock other religions – is not a Bible idea.
- D. Imagine Israel's excited hearts and minds by God mocking enemies to promise rescue.

God Chose Cyrus for the Debate Topic – Verses 2-4

² ***Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.***

- A. God identified the topic of debate – the origin and success of Cyrus the Great of Persia.
1. Over the next chapters, this man, Cyrus by name, will be the focus (Is 44:28; 45:1).
 2. He came from the east, because Persia was east of Babylon and Israel (Isaiah 46:11).
 3. He also came from the north by Media's troops (Is 41:25; 13:17; Dan 5:31; 7:5; 8:3).
 4. God raised up this man out of Persian obscurity against mighty Babylon (Is 46:11).
 5. He called Cyrus the righteous man, for he executed righteousness (Is 45:13; 13:3).
 6. God called Cyrus to His foot as a king that would exactly obey orders (Judges 4:10).
 7. God gave Cyrus all the nations and rulers of the earth (Isaiah 41:25; 45:1; Ezra 1:2).
- B. It is a shame some imagine this man is Abraham (Calvin), Christ (JFB), or Paul (Gill).
1. Cyrus is one of the greatest persons in the Bible for what he did to deliver the Jews.
 2. The following chapters will refer to Cyrus by name or without his name many times.
 3. God called him by name in Isaiah about 150 years before his birth (Is 44:28; 45:1).
 4. We love to imagine Daniel showing Cyrus the book of Isaiah with his name in it.
 5. Reject any commentator or preacher forcing some Artaxerxes into Daniel 9:24-25.
 6. **Cyrus Decree to Rebuild.**

- C. The first challenge of the debate is clear – Who brought about Cyrus ruling the world?

³ ***He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.***

- A. God blessed Cyrus to be successful in his campaigns leading to the defeat of Babylon.

1. No nation or confederacy of nations – see previous verse – could hide or resist him.
 2. Kings and nations were brought to subjection as he built the mighty Persian empire.
 3. These features of his great success are enumerated here to prove God's assistance.
- B. Armies have been destroyed by passage through hard places not fully scouted before.
1. But Cyrus was blessed and enabled by God for success without the usual experience.
 2. Alexander's army was greatly depleted and weakened by his route to and from India.
 3. Napoleon and Hitler overestimated their ability and understated logistics in Russia.
- C. Success of any army or campaign is by God's favor (Is 5:25-30; Ps 76:10; Da 4:34-35).

⁴ ***Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.***

- A. Who did all this in bringing Cyrus out of nowhere to be so successful against Babylon?
1. It was the LORD, and He alone, who called Cyrus to His foot and gave him orders.
 2. All the events necessary for such a grand operation against an empire were by God.
 3. For any doubting if Jehovah did it, think prophecies and immediate release of Jews.
 4. From Jeremiah 25 to Daniel 9, the seventy weeks captivity had to end by a decree.
 5. Cyrus is one of the great Bible and historical figures for God's use of him for Israel.
 6. Where were all the gods of the nations? Their grave images did them no good at all.
- B. Who has been Governor over the affairs of nations and empires from creation forward?
1. If it was Jehovah of Israel that raised up Cyrus for His people, He ruled the world.
 2. A God this great had no competitor, and a God this great had ruled all nations before.
 3. Paul appealed to reasoning Greeks that could grasp God's decrees (Acts 17:24-29).
 4. Nebuchadnezzar, one of earth's greatest kings, learned of God's rule (Dan 4:34-35).
- C. The God of Isaiah and Israel appealed to His name and eternal superiority. I did both.
1. Jehovah is the first, for He was in the beginning and was before all things (Col 1:17).
 2. Jehovah will be there in the end, and not a thing will happen in time without Him.
 3. Jehovah by His name is the eternal, self-existent, independent I AM THAT I AM.

God Mocked the Idolaters' Response – Verses 5-7

⁵ ***The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.***

- A. Idolatrous nations saw Cyrus rise in great power and overthrow Babylon for the Jews.
1. This matter of national and political history is the basis of God's contest (Is 41:1-4).
 2. Prophecies here, before here, and after here, about Cyrus by name had to be known.
 3. The outcome of Cyrus taking Babylon in a night and releasing the Jews was known.

4. All nations knew the Jews worshipped an unusual God named Jehovah in Jerusalem.
- B. These pagan nations were terrified by the power of Israel's Jehovah working for Jews.
 1. Those that once thought Jehovah was false by the captivity were now much alarmed.
 2. There were councils and conferences by the nations to consider all aspects of Cyrus.
 3. Reports of prophecies and the return of the Jews would have been fully discussed.
 4. They held religious revivals for fear of invincible divine power and a new empire.
- C. Think! Rather than repent, reform, and worship, they tried fig leaves like father Adam.
- D. Reader! Have you been convicted or shown truth of God and have hid from the light?

⁶ ***They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.***

- A. The pagan nations among themselves and within themselves encouraged each other.
 1. There is to the natural man a great deal of comfort and courage in his associations.
 2. Pagans and carnal Christians love agreement and numbers for comfort and courage.
 3. But God blasted any such idea (Isaiah 8:9-15; Prov 11:21; 16:5; I Timothy 6:3-5).
 4. Think long and hard about following a crowd in evil (Exodus 23:2; Num 14:1-10).
- B. The foolish Philistines encouraged themselves due to God's ark present (I Sam 4:7-9).
 1. They should have repented, reformed, and worshipped; matters quickly got worse.
 2. **Emerods and Mice** (I Sam 4-6).

⁷ ***So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.***

- A. Rather than repent, reform, and worship, the idolaters chose to worship graven images.
 - There is a lie in the right hand of such worshippers and evolutionists today (Is 44:20).
 - In the previous chapter God mocked both fancy ones and totem poles (Is 40:18-20).
 - Tradition is a damnable substitute for true religion; it is dogs returning to vomit, etc.
- B. What a travesty of ignorance and rebellion that idolaters will not see and will not repent.
 1. The devil takes confused souls captive at his will (II Tim 2:25-26; II Thess 3:1-2).
 2. God gives all men multiple chances – starting by creation (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-32).
 3. If you think idolatry as mocked here is insanity, are not a big bang and evolution worse?

God Declared Personal Love for Israel – Verses 8-9

⁸ ***But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.***

- A. The inspired disjunctive but is to contrast and explain Israel's very different religion.
 1. The previous context presents terrified pagans at the rise of Cyrus seeking to idols.
 2. Their only recourse was to unite in religious zeal for idolatry – more graven images.

3. The following context repeats in detail they need not fear for He would save them.
 4. No matter how severe the national and political upheaval, Jehovah was their helper.
 5. Let us remember that these abominable idolaters were Gentiles, our dear ancestors.
- B. Let wise readers observe the three relationships that Israel and thus we have with God.
1. Israel served and worshipped the true and living God by His choice. See next verse.
 2. Rather than serve and worship idols, which the Gentiles did, Israel served Jehovah.
 3. The basis and cause of Israel's different religion, faith, and God was His own choice.
 4. God chose Abraham from among idolaters, which Joshua declared (Joshua 24:1-3).
 5. If God had not chosen to save and to reveal Himself, we would be idolaters at best.
 6. God chose to elect, to justify, to regenerate, to convert (Rom 8:29-30; II Thess 2:13).
 7. Far better than a servant, Israel's father was Abraham, God's friend in many different ways (Gen 12:1-3,17; 13:2; 15:1,14,18; 18:17-19; 22:15-18; II Chr 20:7; Jas 2:23).
 8. God's choice of believers in Christ is not for servants, but adopted sons (I Jn 3:1-2).
 9. In Christ Jesus by faith and baptism, we are the true seed of Abraham (Gal 3:26-29).

⁹ ***Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.***

- A. Here the precious doctrine and personal relationship of the previous verse are repeated.
1. The ends of the earth included Media (Is 13:5) and Ur of the Chaldeans of Abraham.
 2. There were great men in the area of Babel then, but God chose Abraham from them.
- B. God's choice in election have two angles stated or implied here for the joy of our souls.
1. When God makes choice of His people, He also makes choice to cast others away.
 2. Vessels of mercy are unique enough but they are opposite rejected vessels of wrath.
 3. When God makes choice of His people, He will not alter His mind to cast them away.
 4. Thus, God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham that is fulfilled in Christ.

God Told Israel Not to Fear Enemies – Verses 10-14

¹⁰ ***Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.***

- A. Israel's captivity in Babylon, far from home and mocked, was frightening (Ps 137:1-6).
1. The contrast in power between their enemies and themselves was totally impossible.
 2. As captives in a strange land, they were totally subject to the politics of the nations.
- B. These precious statements loved by many over generations will be repeated variously.
1. They are repeated in the context of this lesson in just a few verses (Isaiah 41:13-14).

2. Rather than dissect and analyze each clause or phrase, embrace the encouragement.
 3. In the verses and chapters that follow, there will be many reminders of God's help.
 4. The rise of Cyrus was great news for Israel, though not for Babylon and its nations.
 5. God fully intended to cause terror in Babylon and among its confederates by Cyrus.
 6. Christians should embrace these verses in context but claim the promises in Christ.
- C. Let us note just a few features of these promises that might comfort or excite your soul.
1. Find the two painful faults of God's people when in great trouble – fear and dismay.
 2. Find and count the five first person pronouns God used for Himself as their helper.
 3. Find the two personal remedies for their fear and dismay – God's presence and Deity.
 4. Find the three verbal antidotes to their fear and dismay – strength, help, and uphold.
- D. From this verse comes at least one verse of the popular hymn, How Firm a Foundation.

¹¹ ***Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.***

- A. The enemies of Israel certainly included Babylon but would also quickly include Persia.
1. Babylon would be completely overthrown and its king Belshazzar slain in one night.
 2. The complete reversal from Babylon to Cyrus is so dramatic to warrant great praise.
 3. Haman would later rise in Persia to legalize Jews killing him, his sons, and 75,800.
- B. The great power of Babylon would be ashamed and confounded to be defeated so easily.
- C. The great power of Babylon lost all its power and reputation and went out of existence.

¹² ***Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.***

- A. The prophecy of Babylon's ruin (by Cyrus) is repeated here from the previous verse.
- B. Babylon would disappear as a mighty empire and lose its existence among the nations.
- C. Haman, his ten sons, and 75,800 more Jew-haters would be extinguished in two days.

¹³ ***For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.***

- A. Refer to the introductory verse in this lesson that declared these promises (Isaiah 41:10).
- B. However, note that here and next He is more than their God – He is their God Jehovah.
- C. Embrace the personal description – holding the right hand, comforting, and promising.
- D. Upheaval of the world's great empires are merely God's chess game to save His people.

¹⁴ ***Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.***

- A. God called the Jews in Babylon to be a worm for helplessness, vulnerability, weakness.
1. To be God's little worm! What a privileged position! What a promised deliverance!
 2. Job and Jesus knew this creature appropriately described them (Job 25:5-6; Ps 22:6).

3. With no ability, power, or riches of theirs to escape, God Himself would save them.
- B. Here in this verse God exalted Himself by two great names over earlier (Isaiah 41:10).
 1. The LORD, in all capitals, is the tetragrammaton, JHVH, for I AM THAT I AM.
 2. The Holy One of Israel, almost exclusively Isaiah (25/30), was by vision (Is 6:1-8).
 3. **Name Above All Names.**
- C. Note here the use of redeemer for God delivering Israel out of Babylon by the Persians.
 1. God as Israel's redeemer is another favorite of Isaiah (13/18) for their deliverance.
 2. Redeem = buying something or someone back from claims against them by others.
 3. Babylon owned Israel by their military victory and bringing the captives to Babylon.
 4. God redeemed Israel from Babylon by sacrificing Belshazzar, the empire, etc., etc.
 5. **Egypt for Thy Ransom.**

God Promised New Power for Israel – Verses 15-16

¹⁵ ***Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.***

- A. For two verses here you must remember former methods of processing grain in harvest.
 1. The prophets used similitudes or metaphors so forget distracting literal applications.
 2. Think! The sharper threshing instrument here was to thresh mountains. A similitude!
 3. Recall from earlier in Isaiah that God put in men different methods (Is 28:27-28).
- B. For simplicity, certain grains were crushed to separate the grain from husks and straw.
 1. Laid on a smooth floor, oxen treaded out corn or drew a dray/sledge over the sheaves.
 2. The wain, sledge, or dray sometimes had serrated wheels or other devices to cut.
- C. God promised Israel a new threshing instrument with sharp teeth to process mountains.
 1. It is called new, so God's use of sharp and teeth here was an advanced farming tool.
 2. This new device would be more effective than anything before, even for hard things.
 3. Threshing enemies is a great inspired use of a metaphor for destroying them (Ps 18:42; Proverbs 20:26; Jeremiah 51:33; Amos 1:3; Micah 4:11-13; Habakkuk 3:12).
 4. And threshing Babylon has already been presented in Isaiah's preaching (Is 21:10).
- D. The mountains and hills that Israel could easily thresh were the nations and their rulers.
 1. By the context we must include Babylon, as the great mountain opposing the Jews.
 2. But we know not long after Cyrus God threshed Haman, sons, and 75,800 enemies.
 3. And we know not long after Persia that God threshed Antiochus IV by Maccabees.

¹⁶ ***Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou***

shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

- A. For two verses here you must remember former methods of processing grain in harvest.
 - 1. The prophets used similitudes or metaphors so forget distracting literal applications.
 - 2. Think! Fanning a threshing floor caused wind to carry the chaff away. A similitude!
 - 3. Recall from earlier in Isaiah that God put in men different methods (Is 28:27-28).
- B. In addition to inventing a new, sharper threshing instrument, He would send a tornado.
- C. God's empowerment and enablement of the Jews over their enemies would cause joy.
 - 1. When we cry to God for help, and He delivers us, we should praise Him (Ps 50:15).
 - 2. We should glory in our holy God for all He has done for us in time and for eternity.

God Promised Provision for Israel – Verses 17-20

¹⁷ ***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.***

- A. For four verses you should consider other natural blessings valued in a land like Israel.
 - 1. The prophets used similitudes or metaphors so forego exclusive literal applications.
 - 2. Think! Water in dry places for thirsty people; trees for fruit and shade. A similitude!
 - 3. Water and trees (long-term assets) are metaphors for God's provision of their needs.
 - 4. Life is more than deliverance from enemies; it also requires the provision of needs.
 - 5. The returning remnant had a terrible 900-mile trip home to destroyed city and homes.
- B. Rather than God only doing these things literally for Israel, we also see spiritual favors.
 - 1. We make this choice for water representing favor as when Israel came out of Egypt.
 - 2. We make this choice for prophets used similitudes for such things (Amos 8:11-13).
 - 3. We make this choice for the previous similitude being about enemies, this provision.
 - 4. We make this choice since we cannot read in the history of the return of such things.
 - 5. We make this choice for the extreme idea of rivers, fountains, pools, springs, trees.
 - 6. We do not exclude agricultural revival or similar blessings either (Ezek 36:22-38).
- C. Israel in Babylon in this context was first fearful of their strong enemies (Is 41:10-16).
 - 1. Recall that God called them a worm for their helplessness, vulnerability, weakness.
 - 2. Therefore, God promised above to be their friend and helper against fear and dismay.
 - 3. Life is more than deliverance from enemies; it also requires the provision of needs.
- D. The remnant was also poor and needy in farms, joy, leaders, means, spirit, worship, etc.
 - 1. The trip to Jerusalem, which was by then a great deal of neglected rubble, was hard.
 - 2. Their farms were trashed and cities ruined, which was their destination after travel.
 - 3. Water and trees (long-term assets) are metaphors for God's provision of their needs.

4. Consider laughter filling their mouths when their captivity was ended (Ps 126:1-6).
5. Not only they but the Gentiles around them witnessed God's provision (Ps 126:1-6).
6. Consider what we learned about Tyre sending her riches to Israel (Isaiah 23:15-18).
7. Consider what we learned about the returned remnant revived with water (Isaiah 35).
8. Consider how God gave natural and spiritual blessings by Ezekiel (Ezek 36:22-38).
9. Add that God also raised up Haggai and Zechariah for the remnant (Ezra 5:1; 6:14).

¹⁸ ***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.***

- A. The similitudes describe a combination of all kinds of needed provision for the remnant.
- B. See the fuller explanation above for a fuller explanation of God's provision (Is 41:17).

¹⁹ ***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:***

- A. The similitudes describe a combination of all kinds of needed provision for the remnant.
- B. See the fuller explanation above for a fuller explanation of God's provision (Is 41:17).

²⁰ ***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.***

- A. God's miraculous provision, after deliverance from Babylon, was for Jehovah's glory.
 1. This theme about a return for God's glory has been presented (Is 26:12-21; 35:1-10).
 2. This theme will be pursued in coming chapters (Isaiah 43:7-13,21; 44:23; 45:6-8).
 3. The Psalmist wrote of Jews and Gentiles rejoicing in the provision (Psalm 126:1-6).
 4. Ezekiel foretold similar things for the same goal – God's glory (Ezek 36:22 – 37:14).
- B. We should find every deliverance and provision in our lives for the glory of our God.
- C. **God-Glorifying Lives.**

God Mocked Idols' Foresight and Power – Verses 21-24

²¹ ***Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.***

- A. The wording of this text should cause believers' hearts to pound and minds to celebrate.
 1. Think about a heavyweight champion taunting, Give me your best shot, chump!
 2. Let all the atheists, skeptics, and scorners say what they will. Our God dares them!
- B. After promising kind, supernatural care (Is 41:8-20), God returned to mocking idolatry.
 1. He continued a challenge from the beginning of the chapter for a debate about deity.
 2. He had ridiculed the response of fearful pagans loving manmade images (Is 41:5-7).

- C. God had presented His cause by mocking idolatry and promising blessings to His Israel.
 - 1. Now it was their turn to produce cause for trust and worship by strong arguments.
 - 2. He had given His cause for trust and worship – He would bless Cyrus to bless Israel.
- D. The cause God emphasized to prove deity is fulfilled prophecy, which no idol can do.
 - 1. He began this chapter declaring the rise of Cyrus 150 years in advance (Is 41:2-4).
 - 2. He then mocked idolatry (Is 41:5-7); He then foretold Israel's glory (Is 41:8-20).
 - 3. **Glory of Fulfilled Prophecy.**
- E. Our God has no fear of exposing Himself to debate or examination, for He is the LORD!
 - 1. God's truth in the Bible is above and beyond human correction; never be ashamed.
 - 2. We have a supernatural book proven a hundred different ways and unlike all others.
 - 3. **Why I Believe the Bible.**

²² ***Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.***

- A. Our glorious God challenges all idols to prove their deity by prophesying the future.
- B. The plural antecedent the idols were to bring forth were their strong reasons (Is 41:21).
 - 1. From the beginning of the chapter (Is 41:2-4), the challenge is fulfilled prophecy.
 - 2. God challenged idols to bring forth prophecies of what would happen in the future.
- C. God's challenge then involved the order and process of events from past into the future.
 - 1. The former things are not history (which requires nothing), but former to the future.
 - 2. The former things are not history, but rather present things, for it says, what they be.
 - 3. A prophecy worth considering must start with things known and then the unknown.
 - 4. The four clauses or phrases in the middle of the verse indicate a compound prophecy.
 - 5. Consider, a fortune cookie says, Your job will get better, but what, when, why, how?
 - 6. The idols had to take present facts that could be evaluated and foretell the latter end.
- D. If an analysis of present things and their future is too much, just give us a future event.

²³ ***Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.***

- A. A repetition in other words of the challenge for idols to prophesy the future or perform.
- B. One attribute for a god in our God's contest was to give an observable prophecy of facts.
- C. The other attribute for a god is to do something big – good or bad – to overwhelm men.

²⁴ ***Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.***

- A. The conclusion of the contest is here and elsewhere – idols are nothing and abominable.
- B. Idols are nothing and do nothing, which the Psalmist described gloriously (Ps 115:2-8).
- C. Any man rebellious or stupid enough to choose an idol is an abomination (Ps 115:8).

God Boasted of His Power and Foresight – Verses 25-27

²⁵ *I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.*

- A. God earlier asked about the rise and success of Cyrus (Is 41:2-4) – here He declared it.
 - 1. Over the next chapters, this man, Cyrus by name, will be the focus (Is 44:28; 45:1).
 - 2. He came from the north, by joining with Media (Isaiah 13:17; Daniel 5:31; 7:5; 8:3).
 - 3. He also came from the east, the rising of the sun, for Persia was east (Is 41:2; 46:11).
 - 4. The coming destroyer of Babylon would come from the north (Jer 50:3,9,41; 51:48).
 - 5. The God of the Jews foretold pagan Cyrus calling on His name (Ezra 1:1-4). Amen!
- B. Cyrus the Great of Persia was a powerful king that defeated enemies and took Babylon.
 - 1. He treated princes of other nations like mortar ... trampling it until properly mixed.
 - 2. He treated princes of other nations like clay ... treading on them as if preparing clay.
 - 3. We have cement mixers and can buy prepared clay, but these metaphors involve feet.

²⁶ *Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.*

- A. Who in the history of the world has had ability to declare the future for us to know it?
 - 1. Who has declared great things beforetime, meaning in advance, to prove his deity?
 - 2. If a being or person can tell things in advance, we will own him God and righteous.
 - 3. But there have never been nor ever will be any such righteous gods, but God Himself.
- B. Let the facts be fully confessed by all that there is no other Being or Person to prophesy.
 - 1. The fact is ... there is no idol, priest, prophet, or king that can show the future to any.
 - 2. The fact is ... there is no idol, priest, prophet, or king that can tell the future to any.
 - 3. The fact is ... there is no nation or its rulers that have heard the future truly declared.
 - 4. Idols cannot show or tell the future, for their mouths cannot communicate (Ps 115:5).
- C. There is only one God, and His name is Jehovah, for He only can declare future things.
 - 1. He may give very limited and partial knowledge to heretics for a test (Deut 13:1-5).
 - 2. These false prophets with a working sign or wonder were to be killed by the people.
 - 3. His true prophets never err in their prophecies, which is their proof (Deut 18:20-22).
 - 4. Religions like Islam are lies, for Mohamed nor the Koran have fulfilled prophecies.

²⁷ *The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.*

- A. Do not let this language bother you, like it does most commentators. Who is the first?
 - 1. God Jehovah is the first, which He has clearly declared of Himself here (Isaiah 41:4).

2. He will declare this specific fact again and again in regard to Cyrus (Is 44:6; 48:12).
 3. In context of the preceding verse, He is the first being or deity to declare the future.
 4. Our Jesus in His divine nature is before all things, first and last (Col 1:17; Rev 2:8).
- B. Jehovah, the first and only God to truly prophesy, would tell Zion, Behold, behold them.
1. The God of Israel, identified clearly here as their helper (Is 41:8-14), had comfort.
 2. The first and only God would tell His people to behold future things He told them.
 3. This prophecy and others like it were words to the Jews to watch for Cyrus to come.
 4. When Cyrus rose and took the city of Babylon as he did, the Jews already knew him!
- C. One future gift of God to Jerusalem now declared was Cyrus' order to rebuild the city.
1. These were some of the best words ever heard concerning Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4).
 2. This foretold event of Cyrus's decree was fabulous good news (Isaiah 44:28; 45:13).
 3. This foretold event of Cyrus's decree initiated good news of Messiah (Dan 9:24-25).

God Mocked All Idolaters' Ignorance – Verses 28–29

²⁸ *For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word.*

- A. The conclusion of the debate is that God could not find an idolater with any intelligence.
1. Our God looked on all idolaters, and He could not find one raising a hand to answer.
 2. Our God listened to all idolaters, and He could not find one to answer even a word.
 3. There are at least four questions in the context with question marks (Is 41:2,4,26).
 4. Whether pagan priests or prophets, our God could not find any man with knowledge.
- B. No counsellor could answer or explain God's power or foresight in the affairs of nations.
1. The rise of Cyrus to overthrow Babylon and return Jews to Jerusalem was the test.
 2. Idolaters and their idols are helpless to do anything taking such energy and strength.
 3. Idolaters and their idols are helpless to foresee the future in detail and to declare it.
 4. Never forget the evidence and power of fulfilled prophecies to expose false religion.
- C. The pagan world, no matter their power, riches, or reputation, has no men with wisdom.
1. While professed paganism is growing, we happily classify all unbelievers as pagans.
 2. In some senses, idolaters, at least admitting idol gods, are wiser than evolutionists.
 3. Picking any divine creator is better than imagining the chance origin of the universe.
 4. Fools like Stephen Hawking or Richard Dawkins are too stupid to comprehend deity.
- D. We declare (in some senses agreeing with idolaters) that there is a supernatural Creator.
1. Evidence for His glorious existence is clear (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-32; Acts 14:17).
 2. Of course, idolaters proudly reject the Creator for their imagination (Rom 1:21-23).

3. After creation, providence and conscience prove God before the Bible's revelation.

E. God's confident boasting is holy testimony; our boasting in Him is faith, not arrogance.

²⁹ ***Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.***

A. Behold. Look at the matter carefully and see the correct conclusion from the evidence.

1. Idolaters of every kind, rank, and sex are vanity – worthless without profit or value.
2. Idols – works and images of idolaters – are nothing but wind (hot air) and confusion.
3. Never forget the evidence and power of fulfilled prophecies to expose false religion.
4. **Glory of Fulfilled Prophecy.**

B. Whether idolaters or their idols, they are both equally stupid and worthless (Ps 115:8).

1. The terminology of this and the previous verse indicates idolaters are the antecedent.
2. The terminology of the earlier section indicates idols were the focus (Is 41:21-24).

C. Israel in this chapter heard great comfort – the only true and living God was their God.

1. Their situation in Babylon was not hopeless. In fact, it was God's joy to save them.
2. He identified Himself with Abraham their father as friend. He would not desert them.
3. He had the power to raise up a new world leader and enable him for great exploits.
4. He exposed and mocked the religions, priests, prophets, and idols of their enemies.
5. Our God has now identified Himself through His Son our Lord and Savior forever.

D. Therefore, we esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and we hate every false way, no matter how much ballyhooed by many or few (Ps 119:128,98-100).

Conclusion and Application

1. Our God crushes all gods by any measure.
2. Our religion crushes all religions by any measure.
3. Our faith in the true and living God crushes all other faith.
4. Our Bible supernaturally inspired by God crushes all holy books.