

I Have Chosen Thee

Gospel days are in view as Isaiah begins to preach his sermon concerning the Messiah and His saving work. In chapter 40 the Lord repeatedly asked, 'Have ye not known? Have ye not heard?' These questions served to emphasize the Messiah's divinity and unique ministry which God's prophets had long foretold amongst the Jews. However, Christ's ministry would be expansive and worldwide. Now the Lord calls on the isles, that is, the Gentile nations beyond Israel to present themselves before the Lord to witness an account of Christ's deeds and irrefutable power.

The righteous man

The evidence concerns the Lord's own work in raising up 'the righteous man from the East' and various suggestions are given to identify this person. Some suggest Abraham who was called from Ur of the Chaldees in which case the Lord is showing how from earliest days a chosen people of faith were set apart to serve God's purpose. Some think Cyrus, king of Babylon, is meant who returned the Jews to Jerusalem from exile in the days of Nehemiah. In this case such control over a mighty heathen king as Cyrus shows Christ's greater dominion.

The power of preaching

John Gill suggests the apostle Paul is a suitable candidate for the 'righteous man'. Then the success of Paul's preaching among the Gentile nations and its inroads upon the kingdoms of this world in gospel days demonstrates Christ's supremacy, 'the pulling down of strong holds' Paul tells the Corinthians. Paul opened new lands to the gospel passing safely 'by the way that he had not gone with his feet'. Under his preaching the nations were dust to the sword of the Spirit as sinners were brought to conversion and faith.

Christ the Giver of grace

Some say Christ is the quintessential 'righteous man from the east' raised up by the Father who gave to His Son 'the nations before him, and made him rule over kings'. It is best to see Christ wherever Christ may be seen and view Him as the first recipient of every divine promise and thereafter the Dispenser of all divine grace. Every blessing the church receives, or an Abraham or Paul possesses, comes to us from heaven through Christ, in whom every promise of God is yea and in Him Amen.

Union with Christ

If it is, indeed, the Lord Jesus who is intended under this 'righteous man' title then another comforting thought arises. Our Saviour in these verses is called 'Jacob' and 'Israel', names typically reserved for God's elect people. This reinforces our union with our Saviour. So fully and completely has the Lord Jesus united Himself to His chosen people and identified Himself with the elect for whom He died that He gives us His name and He takes ours. When the Lord Jehovah sees Christ He sees the church, Christ's Bride. When He sees Christ's Bride He sees His dearly beloved Son.

Christ chosen of God

The Lord Jesus is the first chosen Son of God and all God's elect are chosen in Christ. Christ's people, taken from the ends of the earth by gospel preaching, are one body, one family, one church. This message of victory was comforting to the believing remnant of the Old Testament. It is evidence to believers of every age that Christ will not fail to protect His own for whom He died, saying, '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 threshing instrument?

For the church to be likened to 'a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth' might seem strange. The meaning is that first the apostolic witness and thereafter the ministry of the preached word in every age reaps a reward of souls gathered to Christ by God the Holy Spirit. What gave comfort to Isaiah's hearers was the confident certainty that God's word would not return void but would accomplish that whereunto it was sent. God Himself would plant a forest in the wilderness of this world by calling His elect to faith, water it from mountain rivers and prosper it.

We are the proof!

Isaiah's argument is that the success of Christ's kingdom by apostolic preaching would silence the gainsayers.

Regeneration cannot be achieved by human effort, only divine power and purpose, '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'.

Lifeless idols and the living God

The final section again compares the impotent, deaf, dumb and lifeless idols made by the hand of man to the lively, powerful and successful work of God who methodically gathers His church from amongst the nations by gospel preaching. The Lord challenges idolators to bring forth their own gods that their works may be contrasted with Christ's works and exposed by the power of God.

The gospel of good tidings

The One living God has done all His good will and fulfilled His purpose by saving and securing the elect of God. 'The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.' God Almighty shall say to His church, Look carefully at the weak and foolish idols of men, then look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, and be comforted.

Amen

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