

Series: Isaiah 2023
Title: The First
Text: Isaiah 41: 21-29
Place: SGBC, NJ
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You recall chapter 41 begins with God the Savior calling for order in his court. He calls all to his bar of judgment.

Isaiah 41: 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.

He brought forth his witnesses—Abraham and the apostle Paul. The Lord holds up Abraham and Paul as trophies of his grace declaring it is the Lord who called them and made them continue in faith unto the end.

Isaiah 41: 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?...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.

He declared the response of the Gentile idolators to Paul's gospel was outrage and confusion.

Isaiah 41: 5: The isles saw *it*, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. 6: They helped every one his neighbour; and *every one* said to his brother, Be of good courage

We saw in Acts 19 how Demetrius was incensed—enraged—and stirred up the other craftsmen against Paul and against Christ whom he preached. So the Lord left them to go on in their idolatry. Then the Lord brought forth you and me who believe as his witnesses. He declares he alone is the one who makes his people to differ.

Isaiah 41: 8: But thou, Israel, *art* my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. 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. 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.

He declared that those enraged against thee shall be as nothing. There is but one reason. Christ is the Head of his church. He is thy Redeemer and thy Holy One—thy Righteousness and thy Holiness. Christ is the one who Justified his people before the law. Christ is the one who sanctified us unto himself in regeneration creating in us a new holy heart. So he will help us.

Isaiah 41: 13: For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. 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.

He declared he has made us worms a threshing instrument. He uses us to preach the gospel. Then through his gospel he shall do two things: Christ scatters them that are not his as chaff and Christ brings his redeemed to rejoice and glory in the Lord alone.

Isaiah 41: 16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them:

Isaiah 41: 16...and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, *and* shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

He declared that through his gospel he shall nourish us who are poor and needy.

Isaiah 41: 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. 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.

He declares that through the preaching of the gospel he shall plant us, immovable, in Christ, in his house, together with our brethren as trees of righteousness.

Isaiah 41: 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:

Then he declares why he alone accomplishes all this work for his poor, needy, chosen worms through the preaching of the gospel.

Isaiah 41: 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.

So the Lord made his case. He produced his cause. Christ brought forth his strong reasons why he gets all the glory and sinners get none. We see from this passage that God does all the saving—from choosing, to redeeming, to regenerating, to calling, to keeping, to scattering his enemies, to final salvation. Christ does all the saving.

Next, he turns to the court over to any who worship any other god, he says,

Isaiah 41: 21: Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 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;

The Lord declared the former things—he chose his people before the world was made. From eternity, God the Father chose his Son to be the Redeemer of his elect people by laying down his life on the cross.

Isaiah 41: 22...or declare us things for to come. 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.

Here in Isaiah's day, God declared to his people, *'I am thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel'* and exactly as God purposed before the world was made, Christ came forth and redeemed his elect. He purposed it in eternity. He showed us from the garden throughout the old covenant and by the mouth of all the prophets. Then he came forth and accomplished our redemption exactly as he said he would. Do any of the gods being preached from pulpits today do this?

From eternity, God predestinated his elect unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself. Then called us to himself as he said in vv8-9. The god being preached from most pulpits does not do this. Their god is at the mercy of the sinner's will.

He said, *"Let the god men preach do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed [confounded] and behold it together."* Here in Isaiah's day the LORD showed us exactly how unregenerate, religious men would be incensed against Christ, against the gospel and oppose and they did it. Does the god being preached from most pulpits sovereignly rule so that the good and the evil comes to pass exactly as he purposed?

Acts 4: 26: The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27: For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Amos 3:6...shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done *it*?

Ungodly, self-righteous men who oppose God's people were before ordained to this condemnation. They do the sin that is in their hearts. But our sovereign Savior only permits the wrath of man which God works to bring his people to praise him.

Psalm 76: 10: Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Is this the god being preached from most pulpits? Listen to God's verdict concerning all men and the god of their imagination:

Isaiah 41: 22... 24: Behold, ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination *is he that chooseth you.*

Men declare this about their god. They say he redeemed all men but he really did not accomplish redemption. He only made it possible. The sinner has to make his work effectual for themselves by choosing to believe him. They say he wants to regenerate and sanctify but the sinner has to do his part. God says, *"an abomination"*—a disgusting thing to be hated—*"is any man who chooses that god."* Then he again declares Christ his Son is salvation!

Isaiah 41: 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. 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. 27: THE FIRST *shall say* to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 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. 29: Behold, they *are* all vanity; their works *are* nothing: their molten images *are* wind and confusion. Isaiah 42: 1: Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2: He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3: A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4: He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

Subject: The First

Proposition: Christ is the First

Isaiah 41: 26: Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, *He is* righteous?...27: THE FIRST *shall say* to Zion, Behold, behold them...

CHRIST IS THE FIRST BEFORETIME

Before the foundation of the world, God the Father chose his Son. Christ is the First, the Beginning, beforetime.

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

Acts 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Christ is before all things: God the Father chose his Son to have all preeminence in all things, that all fulness dwell in his Son. God the Father chose his people in his Son. He trusted his Son to create all creation. Then Christ came forth and redeemed God's elect. God the Father trusted his Son to call his people and keep us and deliver us to the Father in his righteousness. So Christ created all things in creation and upholds all things and by him all things consist.

Isaiah 48:12: Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last. 13 Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together. 14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these *things*?

CHRIST IS THE FIRST AS WISDOM

Isaiah 41: 26: Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know?...that we may say, *He is righteous?*...27: THE FIRST shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.

Christ the First is Wisdom. Speaking as Wisdom personified, Christ said,

Proverbs 8:22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23: I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

He gives his people understanding by speaking effectually into our hearts, saying, "*Behold, behold.*"—v27: *THE FIRST shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.* Christ is the one who brings good tidings. He gives us understanding that Christ is All. That is what he declared he did with Abraham and the apostle Paul up in verse 4.

Isaiah 41: 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.

We came into this world dead in sins thinking we are princes. *Verse 22...and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.* It is our sin-nature to think we are all powerful. But Christ overcomes his people by his power. We do what John did. We fall at his feet as dead men. He subdues our sin-nature. Then he speaks and reveals he is the First and he gives us life and spiritual understanding in the new man.

Revelation 1:17: And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am THE FIRST and the last:

Christ says, "*Behold, behold.*" He teaches us former things.

Isaiah 42: 9: Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Isaiah 48:5: I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I shewed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

Isaiah 46: 9: Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, 10: Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:...

Christ makes us Behold that he is Salvation set up from eternity who has set all in order by his righteousness. He make us behold that Christ accomplished the redemption of his people by his death on the cross. He makes us behold by giving us discernment to know him and believe on him.

Isaiah 43:10: Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. 11: I, *even* I, *am* the LORD; and beside me *there is* no saviour. 12: I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when *there was* no strange *god* among you: therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I *am* God. 13 Yea, before the day was I *am* he; and *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

Isaiah 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there is* no God. 7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? ye *are* even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.

He is Sovereign. Therefore, concerning all who are not his—*verse 22...and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay*

Colossians 2:15 [on the cross] *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

CHRIST IS THE FIRST AS SALVATION

Isaiah 41: 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. 29: Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.*

Salvation must be by Christ alone because there is no other who can save. When God looked upon fallen humanity there was no man among us without sin. There was no counsellor. We had no wisdom to answer a word. Our religion was one of idol gods. God the Father chose his Son from eternity to be our Counsellor, our Redeemer, our Salvation.

If anyone asks me to state my case, as to how I know that my God is the true God of salvation, this is my one argument—because “My God hath wrought and done all. My salvation—from its conception to its consummation—is of the Lord all.”

Revelation 21: 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Believe on Christ today! If you believe on him then believe on him today! Turn from your works. Turn from anything of self and trust Christ alone! He is Salvation—the Author and Finisher of our faith!

Jeremiah 17:12 A glorious high throne from THE BEGINNING *is* the place of our sanctuary.

Amen!