

ISRAEL: GOD'S ANSWER TO SCEPTICS

LESSON ONE

Mark Twain, *Concerning The Jews, Harper's Magazine, 1899*

"...If statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky way. properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and had done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.

The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed; and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

Isaiah 40:12-31

This section shifts thoughts with a challenge to Jewish people. It builds on the command to "comfort" Israel through their Messiah and God (Isaiah 40:1-11). In total, there are 7 thoughts in this section we will examine: PREMISE, PROBLEM, PROPOSITION, PUZZLE, POLITICIANS, PLAN, and POWER.

1. The Premise

A. God is omnipotent - vs. 12, 15-17 (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6-9)

B. God is omniscient - vs. 13, 14 (1 Chronicles 28:9; Isaiah 46:9-10)

C. God is omnipresent - vs. 22 (Psalm 139:7-10; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 23:24)

LESSON TWO

This lesson will look at the remaining six thoughts in Isaiah 40:12-31. Remember, the focus of this section is the Jewish people.

- 1 PROBLEM
- 2 PROPOSITION
- 3 PUZZLE
- 4 POLITICIANS
- 5 PLAN
- 6 POWER

2. The Problem

- A. Idolatry - vs. 19, 20 (see Ezekiel 14:1-11 for personal application)
- B. Doubt - vs. 27 (James 1:8; Proverbs 3:5-8)

3. The Proposition

Who is like Jehovah? - vs. 18, 25

4. The Puzzle

Why don't you understand? - vs. 21, 28

Verse 28 has 4 challenging truths about God. These are to encourage the people in their dire circumstances.

Eternal God - He will always be.

LORD - "*Jehovah* is translated as "The Existing One" or "Lord." The chief meaning of *Jehovah* is derived from the Hebrew word *Havah* meaning "to be" or "to exist." It also suggests "to become" or specifically "to become known" - this denotes a God who reveals Himself unceasingly."

Blue Letter Bible - Names of God in the O.T.

Creator - He is omnipotent.

Omniscient One - He knows of every circumstance.

5. The Politicians

The powerlessness of the leaders - vs. 23, 24

6. The Plan (the challenge)

Focus on the Creator of the universe - vs. 26

7. The Power

God's provision is present for His people - vs. 29-30

The key is "*to wait upon the LORD.*"

LESSON THREE

As mentioned previously, the statement of a truth does not necessarily make it true about the one to whom it is applied. One has every right, indeed every necessity, to demand evidence proving the validity of a claim. When the issue deals with the question, "*Which God is the true God?*", which is the most important and fundamental question facing mankind, it is imperative that the evidence be indisputable, even inexplicable outside of the one true God's intervention. It is on the basis of this proposition that a challenge is issued by the God of Israel to all who claim to follow the one true God.

Lesson two looked at God's challenge to the Jewish people. This lesson looks at God's challenge to the Gentile peoples of the world.

1. **Gentiles also need to be ready to meet God** Isaiah 41:1

Who can compare to God? Isaiah 41:2

Omnipotent Isaiah 41:2

The "*righteous man from the east*" was named in Isaiah 44:28 – 45:2. God raised up Cyrus to accomplish His will. It would be close to 200 years before this prophecy would be fulfilled. God would subdue nations to make sure Cyrus came to power in the Mede/Persian empire.

Omniscient Isaiah 41:2

The prophecy that Cyrus would come to power and be used of God to accomplish His will speaks of the omniscience of God. Knowing everything, God gave the name of the king He would raise up to deliver Israel.

Omnipresent Isaiah 41:4

Notice, it says "*I the LORD*" [am with] "*the first, and with the last.*" God was in the beginning with the first person (Adam), and will be present with the last person. This speaks of His omnipresence.

2. **Gentiles response to God** Isaiah 41:5-7

A. The feared. Vs. 5

B. They "encouraged" one another. Vs. 6

C. They re-established their religious traditions. Vs. 7

The God of Israel does the same thing in this passage with Gentiles that he did in Isaiah 40:12-31 with Jewish people. He presents Himself as the omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (all-present) God of the universe. The challenge is to all to believe in the God of Israel and not the impotent false gods of the world.

LESSON FOUR

Israel is God's "apologetic" to sceptics and followers of other gods that He alone is God.

Overview of the history of Israel

Isaiah 41:8-19

1. Choosing of Israel vss. 8-9
2. Conflict of Israel vss. 11-12
3. Conservation of Israel vss. 10, 13-14
4. Consummation of Israel vss. 15-19

Verses 15 - 16 speak of the seven year Tribulation period. A "*threshing instrument*" divides the wheat from the chaff, the good from the bad. Matthew 25 has the Jewish people being the dividing "line" between being blessed or cursed. Matthew 25:40 "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*"

5. Purpose of Israel Isaiah 41:20

The "*they*" being addressed here are the Jewish people of Isaiah 40:12-31 and the Gentile people of Isaiah 41:1-7. Jews and Gentiles who are following other gods are challenged to consider the history of Israel and the Jewish people.

Four progressive thoughts are given to consider about Israel and the Jewish people.

SEE

KNOW

CONSIDER

UNDERSTAND

"The preservation of the Jews is really one of the most signal and illustrious acts of divine Providence... and what but a supernatural power could have preserved them in such a manner as none other nation upon earth hath been preserved. Nor is the providence of God less remarkable in the destruction of their enemies, than in their preservation... We see that the great empires, which in their turn subdued and oppressed the people of God, are all come to ruin... And if such hath been the fatal end of the enemies and oppressors of the Jews, let it serve as a warning to all those, who at any time or upon any occasion are for raising a clamor and persecution against them."

Thomas Newton - British Clergyman: Bishop of Bristol (1704-1782)

Israel is God's apologetic to the world. With many of the children of Israel following false gods, as well as the gentiles of the world following false gods, Israel and her history – past, present and future – is the *witness* He gives as to why He, the God of Israel, is the one, true God.

LESSON FIVE

In Isaiah 41:21-23 we have God's challenge to those who follow other gods to give a reason why their god is the one, true god.

- Isaiah 41:21 God asks for evidence for the validity of other gods to be produced by the gods or their followers.
- Isaiah 41:22 The evidence is to be the same as He gave. That is, pre-write history – prophecy.
- Isaiah 41:23 They are told to do whatever they must – good or evil – in order to bring to pass the prophecy, so we may know their god is the one, true god.

The ability to prophecy – without error – demands that the One prophesying be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

Omniscient - He must know the future (everything).

Omnipotent - He must be more powerful than all who would try to prevent His prophecies from coming to pass.

Omnipresent - He must be every where so He can defeat His enemies wherever they might attack.

The God of Israel is the only One who accurately, without fail, gives specific, detailed prophecies. His "apologetic" is the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. No other god or religion provides amazingly detailed prophecies that have come to pass.

This is why we are challenged, in regard to prophecy and its fulfilment:

"Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them."

Isaiah 34:16

LESSON SIX

The challenge of the God of Israel in Isaiah 40:12-31 was to the Jewish people. In Isaiah 41:1-7, God addresses the Gentiles of the world. He presents Himself as the omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (all-present) God of the universe. The challenge is to all to believe in the God of Israel and not the impotent false gods of the world. In defense of this challenge God gave an overview of the history of Israel in Isaiah 41:8-19. The attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence is a must to prophesy.

In this lesson we will see that the gods of this world are impotent and, in reality, don't even exist. The God of Israel has established that He is the one, true God. There is no other. In light of this truth, He tells us that He *"will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings."* Then, in chapter 42 we are commanded to *"Behold my servant."* This is the One God has promised and the one, true God demands we *behold Him*.

Isaiah 41:24-29 Two things should be noted from this passage.

1. All gods, other than the God of Israel are impotent, even non-existent:

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

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

2. The God of Israel is sending His messenger:

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.*

Isaiah 42:1-6 The God of Israel commands both Jew and Gentile to believe in His servant

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.*

6 *I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;*

The God of Israel commands us to believe in His servant – the Messiah. There are four servant passages (Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-10; 52:13-53:12) that tell us about God's servant, the Messiah.

The first two servant passages tell us what he will do – redeem Jew and Gentile from their sin.

The last two servant passages tell us how he will do it – suffer, die, and resurrect from the grave.

Israel and the Jewish people, and Bible prophecy about them, is God's apologetic that we should listen to Him.