

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Prediction of that blessed period when God should gather the posterity of Abraham, with tender care, from their several dispersions in every quarter under heaven, and bring them safely to their own land, Isaiah 43:1-7. Struck with astonishment at so clear a display of an event so very remote, the prophet again challenges all the blended nations and their idols to produce an instance of such foreknowledge, Isaiah 43:8, Isaiah 43:9; and intimates that the Jews should remain (as at this day), a singular monument to witness the truth of the prediction, till it should at length be fulfilled by the irresistible power of God, Isaiah 43:10-13. He then returns to the nearer deliverance - that from the captivity of Babylon, Isaiah 43:14, Isaiah 43:15; with which, however, he immediately connects another deliverance described by allusions to that from Egypt, but represented as much more wonderful than that; a character which will not at all apply to the deliverance from Babylon, and must therefore be understood of the restoration from the mystical Babylon, Isaiah 43:16-18. On this occasion the prophet, with peculiar elegance, and by a very strong poetic figure, represents the tender care of God in comforting and refreshing his people on their way through the desert, to be so great as to make even the wild beasts haunting those parched places so sensible of the blessing of those copious streams then provided by him, as to join their hissing and howling notes with one consent to praise God, Isaiah 43:19-21. This leads to a beautiful contrast of the ingratitude of the Jews, and a vindication of God's dealings with regard to them, Isaiah 43:22-28.

Verse 1

I have called thee by thy name - אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי (karathi beshimcha). So all the versions. But it seems from the seventh verse, and from the thing itself, that we should read אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי (karathicha bishmi), 'I have called thee by my name; for this form of speech often occurs - the other never. For Isaiah 45:24, concerning Cyrus, is another matter; but when God calls Jacob Israel, he calls him by the name of God. See Exodus 31:2. - Secker.

Verse 3

I gave Egypt for thy ransom - This is commonly supposed to refer to the time of Sennacherib's invasion; who, when he was just ready to fall upon Jerusalem, soon after his entering Judea, was providentially diverted from that design, and turned his arms against the Egyptians, and their allies the Cushean Arabians, with their neighbors the Sabeans, probably joined with them under Tirhakah. See Isaiah 20:1-6 and Isaiah 37:9. Or as there are some reasonable objections to this opinion, perhaps it may mean more generally that God has often saved his people at the expense of other nations, whom he had, as it were in their stead, given up to destruction. Vitranga explains this of Shalmaneser's designs upon the kingdom of Judea after he had destroyed that of Samaria, from which he was diverted by carrying the war against the Egyptians, Cusheans, and Sabeans; but of this I think he has no clear proof in history. It is not to be wondered at that many things of this kind should remain very obscure for the want of the light of history, which in regard to these times is extremely deficient.

Did not Cyrus overcome these nations? and might they not be given for releasing the Jews? It seems to have been so from Isaiah 45:14. - Secker.

Kimchi refers all this to the deliverance of Jerusalem from the invasion of Sennacherib. Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, had come out to war against the king of Assyria, who was there-upon obliged to raise the siege of Jerusalem. Thus the Ethiopians, Egyptians, and Sabeans were delivered into the hands of the Assyrians as a ransom for Israel. - Kimchi. I cannot help thinking this to be a very rational solution of the text.

Verse 7

Every one that is called by my name - All who worship the true God, and are obedient to his laws.

I have created him - אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי (berathiv). I have produced him out of nothing.

For my glory - Ten MSS., three ancient, and the Syriac and Vulgate, read אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי (licabodi), without the conjunction ו (vau), and.

I have formed him - אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי (yetsartiv). I have given him that particular form and shape which are best suited to his station in life.

I have made him - אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי אֶנֶךָ שְׁמִי (asithiv). I have adapted him to the accomplishment of my counsels and designs.

Verse 8

Bring forth the blind people that have eyes - Bring forth the people, blind, although they have eyes - I understand this of the Gentiles, as the verse following, not of the Jews. Their natural faculties, if they had made a proper use of them, must have led them to the knowledge of the being and attributes of the one true God; for his eternal power and Godhead, if well attended to, are clearly seen in his works, (Romans 1:20), and would have preserved them from running into the folly and absurdity of worshipping idols. They are here challenged to produce the evidence of the power and foreknowledge of their idol gods; and the Jews are just afterwards, Isaiah 43:10, appealed to as witnesses for God in this cause, therefore these latter cannot here be meant by the people blind with eyes and deaf with ears.

Verse 9

Who among them - Seven MSS., three ancient, and the first edition, 1486, with the Syriac and Vulgate, read x'x'x' (bechem), who among you, the present reading is preferable.

Verse 10

Ye (the Israelites) are my witnesses, and my servant (the prophet) whom I have chosen - That whatever has been said before concerning Sennacherib has been literally fulfilled. The prophet had predicted it; the Israelites saw it accomplished.

Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me - This is a most difficult place. Was there a time when God was not? No! Yet he says, before me. Will there be a time in which God will not exist? No! Yet he says, after me. Are not all these words to be referred to his creation? Before me, no god created any thing, nor was there any thing pre-existent but myself. And after me, i.e., after my creation, such as now exists, there shall be no other class of beings formed. This mode of interpretation frees the passage from all embarrassment, and the context perfectly agrees with it. The words my servant, in this verse, the Targum understands of the Messiah.

Verse 12

I have declared, and have saved - My prophets have always predicted your deliverances before they took place; and I have fulfilled their words to the uttermost.

Verse 14

The Chaldeans, whose cry is on the ships - The Chaldeans exulting in their ships - Babylon was very advantageously situated both in respect to commerce, and as a naval power. It was open to the Persian Gulf by the Euphrates, which was navigable by large vessels; and being joined to the Tigris above Babylon by the canal called Naharmalca or the Royal River, supplied the city with the produce of the whole country to the north of it, as far as the Euxine and Caspian seas, Herod. 1:194. Semiramis was the foundress of this part also of the Babylonian greatness. She improved the navigation of the Euphrates, Herod. 1:184; Strabo, lib. xvi.; and is said to have had a fleet of three thousand galleys, Huet, Hist. du Commerce, chap. 11. We are not to wonder that in later times we hear little of the commerce and naval power of Babylon; for, after the taking of the city by Cyrus, the Euphrates was not only rendered less fit for navigation by being on that occasion diverted from its course and left to spread over the whole country; but the Persian monarchs, residing in their own country, to prevent any invasion by sea on that part of their empire, purposely obstructed the navigation of both the rivers by making cataracts in them, Strabo, ib., that is, by raising dams across the channel, and making artificial falls in them, that no vessel of any size or force could possibly come up. Alexander began to restore the navigation of the rivers by demolishing the cataracts upon the Tigris as far up as Seleucia, Arrian, lib. vii., but he did not live to finish his great designs; those upon the Euphrates still continued. Ammianus, 24:1, mentions them as subsisting in his time.

The prophet therefore might very justly speak of the Chaldeans as glorying in their naval power in his time; though afterwards they had no foundation for making any such boast.

Verse 15

The Creator - For x'x'x' (bore), - Creator, - six MSS. (two ancient) have x'x'x'x'™ (Elohey), - God.

Verse 19

Behold, I will do a new thing - At Isaiah 43:16, the prophet had referred to the deliverance from Egypt and the passage through the Red Sea; here he promises that the same power shall be employed in their redemption and return from the Babylonish captivity. This was to be a new prodigy.

Verse 20

The beast of the field shall honor me - The wild beast of the field shall glorify me - The image is elegant

and highly poetical. God will give such an abundant miraculous supply of water to his people traversing the dry desert in their return to their country, that even the wild beasts, the serpents, the ostriches, and other animals that haunt those arid regions, shall be sensible of the blessing, and shall break forth into thanksgiving and praises to him for the unusual refreshment which they receive from his so plentifully watering the sandy wastes of Arabia Deserta, for the benefit of his people passing through them.

Verse 22

But thou hast not called upon me - The connection is: But thou, Israel, whom I have chosen, whom I have formed for myself to be my witness against the false gods of the nations; even thou hast revolted from me, hast neglected my worship, and hast been perpetually running after strange gods. The emphasis of this and the following parts of the sentence, on which the sense depends, is laid on the words Me, on My Account, etc. The Jews were diligent in performing the external services of religion; in offering prayers, incense, sacrifices, oblations; but their prayers were not offered with faith; and their oblations were made more frequently to their idols than to the God of their fathers. The Hebrew idiom excludes with a general negative, in a comparative sense, one of two objects opposed to one another: thus, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," Hosea 6:6. "For I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice," Jeremiah 7:22, Jeremiah 7:23. And the meaning of this place of Isaiah seems to be much the same with that of Amos; who however has explained at large both parts of the comparison, and specified the false service opposed to the true: -

Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings,
 In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
 Nay, but you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch,
 And Chiun, your images;
 The star of your god, which you made to yourselves.

Amos 5:25. Amos 5:26.

But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel – Neither on my account hast thou laboured, O Israel – For xTMxTMxTMxTM (ki yagata), the Septuagint and Vulgate read xTMxTMxTMxTM (veyagata). - Houbigant. The negative is repeated or referred to by the conjunction xTM (vau), as in many other places. See note on Isaiah 23:4.

Verse 25

I, even I, am he - The original is extremely abrupt: x•x x•x™ x•x x•x™ x”x•x• (anochi anochi hu), æœl, I, He.æœ. Is there any mystery in this form? Does it refer to a plurality of persons in the Godhead?

For mine own sake - In the pardon of sin God can draw no reason but from his own infinite goodness.

Verse 27

Thy first father hath sinned - On this Kimchi speaks well: "How can ye say that ye have not sinned, seeing your first father, Adam, sinned; and man hath sin impressed on him through natural generation?"

Verse 28

I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary &œThy princes have profaned my sanctuary&€ - Instead of x•x•x—xœxœ x©xˆx™ (vaachallel sarey), read x•x™x—xœxœx• x©xˆx™šš (vayechalelu sareycha). So the Syriac and Septuagint, Î±Î²Î³ Î´µ¶·¸¹º»¼½¾¿ÀÁÂÃÄÅ ÆÇÈÉÊËÌÍÎÏÐÑÒÓÔÕÖ×ØÙÚÛÜÝÞßàáâãäåæçèéêëìíîïðñ, âœœthe rulers have defiled my holy things.&€ x\$Œ“x©x™ (kodshi), Houbigant. ÍŸá¼± ±î•î†îĴî½, îµî, î¶î á¼•î¶î± î¼îĴî... , âœœthy rulers, âœœMSS. Pachom. and 1. D. 2 and Marchal.

To reproaches â€œTo reproachâ€• - xœx'x“x•xœx” (ligeduphah), in the singular number; so an ancient MS. and the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate. And, alas! what a curse do they still bear, and what reproach do they still suffer! No national crimes have ever equalled those of the Jewish nation, for no nation ever had such privileges to neglect, despise, sin against. When shall this severity of God towards this people have an end? Answ. Whenever, with one heart, they turn to him, and receive the doctrine of the Lord Jesus; and not till then.