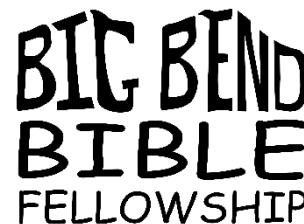


# Fear Not

Isaiah 43

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## Isaiah 43:1-7 – Reasons not to fear (NIV)

*But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. <sup>3</sup>For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. <sup>4</sup>Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. <sup>5</sup>Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. <sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— <sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”*

### v1 – What is the fundamental characteristic of the Lord?

*Says the LORD, who created you...and He who formed you:* God speaks to His people as their Creator. God has a special and unique claim upon us because He is our Creator. When men forget or reject God as Creator, they fail in the most basic obligation they have to God.

### What is God’s message to Judah and us?

*Fear not:* This is a command, accompanied by promises. By outward circumstances, the people of Judah had reason to be afraid of Babylon’s army and exile. God points them past the present circumstances to both this command and promise.

### Why should we fear not?

*For I have redeemed you:* Not only did Israel have an obligation to God as their Creator but also as their Redeemer. He is the One who bought them out of literal exile and spiritual slavery.

- When God calls Himself our Redeemer, He refers to the price that must be paid for our salvation.

### How is it God owns His people?

*I have called you by your name; You are mine:* God twice owns His people. He has the right of ownership both as Creator and Redeemer. His ownership is personal because He says I have called you by your name. His ownership is certain because He seals it by saying You are mine.

### How does belonging to the Lord relate to fearing not?

Knowing that we belong to the LORD is a wonderful answer to fear. We can know that He holds us, protects us, guards us, and cares for us. We can know that He would not have created, redeemed, and called us unless He intended to finish His work in us.

- How can we be afraid when we know this God is for us, is looking out for our interests?

### v2 – When will God be with us?

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you:* Through any potential obstacle, God will be with us. Deep waters? I will be with you. Must you walk through the fire? Then you shall not be burned.

- When God is with us, He is for us, and who can be against us?

### What is the value of trials?

They help us grow closer to the Lord by giving us opportunities to experience Him delivering us. Thus, they grow our faith.

### Why is it we should walk through the fire instead of run?

With God helping us, we don’t have to panic, we don’t have to fear, and we don’t have to run as if we didn’t trust God. He can so strengthen us in our trials that we can walk through the fire.

Isaiah 28:16 – *Whoever believes will not act hastily*

### v3 – How is it God gave Egypt for Israel’s ransom?

He sacrificed the Egyptians instead of the Israelites when He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt, and saved Israel his firstborn; He drowned the Egyptians in the Red sea, when the Israelites passed safely through it.

### **How is it God used Ethiopia and Seba in Judah's place?**

This refers either to the rumour brought to Assyrian King Sennacherib of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia coming against him, which diverted him from the siege of Jerusalem, and caused him to turn his forces upon the Ethiopians and Sabeans (2 Kings 19:9).

### **v4 – Why did God redeem His people?**

*Since you were precious in My sight:* God here describes the motivation for His work of redemption. He loves us! We are precious in His sight! This is an Old Testament example of the truth in John 3:16: *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.*

- To prove His love for His people, God was willing to give Egypt, Cush, and Seba as a ransom for Israel.

### **v5-6 – Why should Israel fear not?**

God would bring back the people of Israel following their dispersion out of the land of Israel. This is in preparation for their redemption as a nation and the Millennial Kingdom.

### **Is there significance to the order of the Jews being returned to the land of Israel here?**

When biblical prophecy is fulfilled, it is exact in every detail. Even the order of the Jews returning to the land of Israel was prophesied. Their return began in the Middle East from Syria, Iraq, and Jordan in 1930-1940. Then the Jews returned from Western Europe after WWII due to the holocaust. They returned from Russia which is north of Israel starting in 1988 and finally from Ethiopia to the south as part of Operation Solomon, in the summer of 1991. The Jews are officially back in their land!

### **v7 – What does it mean to be created for God's glory?**

God not only has created us but that He has created us for a purpose. If we have no Creator, then we are purposeless; but God has created us, and He did it for a purpose, creating us for His glory. This means that when we are glorifying God, we are fulfilling the purpose we were created for, and will therefore be the happiest and fulfilled.

### **Isaiah 43:8-13 – Witnesses to the work of the Lord**

<sup>8</sup> *Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.* <sup>9</sup> *All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble. Which of their gods foretold this and proclaimed to us the former things? Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right, so that others may hear and say, "It is true."* <sup>10</sup> *"You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.* <sup>11</sup> *I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no*

*savior.* <sup>12</sup> *I have revealed and saved and proclaimed— I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God.* <sup>13</sup> *Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"*

### **v8 – Who is it God wants to see and hear Him?**

Previously, in Isaiah 42:19, the LORD spoke of His blind and deaf servants, who had willingly closed their eyes and ears to His truth and ways. Now, God tells these blind and deaf servants of His to come forth — with all the nations who will be gathered together.

### **v9 – What is it God wants all people to declare?**

*Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses:* God invites His people (who are blind and deaf) and the nations to testify: to prove Him to be wrong or to prove that they are justified in their rejection of Him.

- It is as if God is saying, "You have chosen to worship and honor other gods. Come before Me now and justify yourself. Bring plenty of witnesses."

### **v10 – What does God call on His people to do?**

*You are My witnesses:* God's people had witnessed the greatness of God. If only Israel would remember the great things God had done among them, they would see each wonderful work of His as a witness to the truth that He is the only true God.

### **To what should Israel as God's servant be a witness?**

*And My servant whom I have chosen that you may know and believe Me:* A witness is a passive observer of what someone has done, and Israel had seen the great works of God. But they were more than passive observers; God called Israel to be His servant. That was why they were chosen — not to sit around and glory in their chosen-ness, but to serve the LORD, and to know the LORD and believe Him in every way.

### **What should believe about God as His witness?**

*Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me:* In clear, certain words, God says that not only is He the most high God, but that there are no other gods beside Him. There are no "junior gods." There are no "second class gods." There was no God formed before the LORD, and there will be no God formed after Him.

### **What about Biblical passages which some take to suggest there are other gods?**

John 10:34, Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6-7, saying *You are gods*. But the judges of Psalm 82 were called “gods” because in their office they determined the fate of other men. In John 10, Jesus is saying “*if God gives these unjust judges the title ‘gods’ because of their office, why do you consider it blasphemy that I call Myself the ‘Son of God’ in light of the testimony of Me and My works?*” Jesus did not take the phrase you are gods of Psalm 82 and applying it to all humanity, or to all believers. The use of gods in Psalm 82 was a metaphor.

### **How about 2 Corinthians 4:4, where Paul calls Satan the god of this age?**

Certainly, he does not mean Satan is a true god rivaling the Lord God. Satan can be called the god of this age because so many people regard him as god! But Paul made it clear in 1 Corinthians 8:4-5 that the idols the nations worship are merely so-called gods, and that there is no other God but one.

### **How does the uniqueness of God help us have a more correct view of the Trinity?**

The Trinity is one Creator-Godhead expressed as three persons. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have the opinion that Jesus is indeed a god, but something of a “junior level god.”

- They will allow that He is a mighty God (Isaiah 9:6), but not that He is Almighty God.

But when the LORD says through Isaiah, before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me, it proves there is only one true God.

- There are figurative or metaphorical gods, such as the judges of Psalm 82.
- There are false gods such as the devil or the idols of the nations.

But there are no true Gods apart from the LORD, Yahweh, who is One God in Three Persons.

- Ironically, the Jehovah’s Witnesses took their title from this very passage which proves their doctrine regarding Jesus is wrong.

### **v11 – How else is God unique?**

*And besides Me there is no savior*: The LORD God is the only savior. Only He has declared and saved — there was no foreign god among you who did any good. He is our help and support. Sadly, we often turn to our only savior as a last resort, instead of as a first resource.

### **Since Jesus is our Savior, and there is no other Savior beside the Lord, what does that tell us about Jesus?**

Then Jesus must be the Lord. The LORD, Yahweh, is One God in Three Persons.

### **v12 – What did God declare about Israel?**

*Therefore, you are My witnesses*: If Israel would remember that only the LORD has ever rescued them, they would not be so quick to turn to other gods and to turn away from the LORD. We should all be witnesses to the saving, rescuing, and healing work of the LORD.

### **v13 – What credentials of God does He mention here?**

God’s credentials go beyond His saving work on behalf of His people. He comes before time itself. Before there was ever a day, God was. So, His strength is infinitely greater than anyone else’s; He can rightly say there is no one who can deliver out of My hand. When God does something, no one will reverse it.

### **Isaiah 43:14-28 – God’s Mercy, Israel’s Unfaithfulness**

<sup>14</sup> *This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “For your sake I will send to Babylon and bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians, in the ships in which they took pride. <sup>15</sup> I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel’s Creator, your King.” <sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord says— he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, <sup>17</sup> who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: <sup>18</sup> “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. <sup>19</sup> See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. <sup>20</sup> The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, <sup>21</sup> the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise. <sup>22</sup> “Yet you have not called on me, Jacob, you have not wearied yourselves for me, Israel. <sup>23</sup> You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings nor wearied you with demands for incense. <sup>24</sup> You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses. <sup>25</sup> “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. <sup>26</sup> Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence. <sup>27</sup> Your first father sinned; those I sent to teach you rebelled against me. <sup>28</sup> So I disgraced the dignitaries of your temple; I consigned Jacob to destruction and Israel to scorn.*

#### **v14 – What would God do for Judah’s sake?**

*For your sake I will send to Babylon:* Corrective measures to bring Judah back to Him... Isaiah prophesied before the Babylonians ever conquered Judah and sent the nation into a 70-year exile. Yet Isaiah prophesies, not only about the coming captivity but also beyond it to the eventual judgment upon Babylon for what they will do to Judah.

#### **v15 – How does God describe Himself?**

He is the Creator of Israel and their King. As such He has ultimate authority over them.

#### **v16-17 – What does God invite Israel to recall?**

*Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea:* When God parted the Red Sea so Israel could cross and escape the Egyptian armies (Exodus 14). Isaiah powerfully brings up these images when he writes of the chariot and the horse, the army and the power of these enemies of God’s people, and how they shall lie down together...they are extinguished.

#### **Why does God want Israel to remember this regarding Babylon?**

Just as God overwhelmed the Egyptian armies that had enslaved Israel, so would He judge the Babylonians also.

- Even though Babylon was only an up-and-coming world power, they’d become a world dominating super-power. But even then, Israel could be confident that God was able to deliver them.

#### **What is the principle here that applies to us today?**

This teaches us that we can always justify trusting God right now by remembering the great things He has done.

- And this also teaches us that we never want to oppose the Lord or His people.

#### **v18 – What did God want Israel to not remember?**

As Isaiah wrote prophetically to Israel, they were mired in the desperate circumstances of captivity and exile. God wanted to put their eyes on the new work He would do, so He began with a reminder to not remember their former failure of sin and discouragement of the past. This would keep them from going forward to the new thing God had for them.

#### **How does this remembering and not remembering apply to us today?**

There is a sense in which we must remember the past, in terms of God’s great work on our behalf. There is also a sense in which we must forsake and forget the past, with all its discouragement and defeat, and move on to what God has for us in the future.

#### **v19 – What is the encouragement in God doing a new thing?**

Staying stuck in the past can keep us from the new thing God wants to do. If Israel stayed stuck in the discouragement and seduction of Babylon, they would never look for the new thing of release from exile.

#### **How do we need balance in looking forward to the new thing?**

We must be sure the new thing is of God... We can make an idol out of the “new.” We can err as the people of Athens did who spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing (Acts 17:21). We can be tossed about by every wind of doctrine.

- But we can also err on the other side of the balance, and work against the new thing God wants to do.

#### **v19-20 – What is this road in the wilderness?**

Between the captivity in Babylon and the return to Israel lay hundreds of miles of wilderness. God’s people didn’t need to be afraid because God would make a road in the wilderness, provide rivers in the desert, and even protect His people from animals, because the beast of the field will honor Me, the LORD says.

#### **How should we view obstacles in light of the promises of God?**

Often, when God makes a promise, we worry about the details or the obstacles for the fulfillment of the promise.

- God replies, “Don’t worry about it. I will even make a road in the wilderness. I have resources and plans you don’t know about. Leave those problems to Me.”

#### **v21 – Why would God’s people declare His praise?**

This is part of fulfilling the purpose God created us for, as mentioned in Isaiah 43:7 (*Whom I created for My glory*). When we declare our praise for God, we are giving Him glory, and fulfilling one of the purposes for which we were created.

- This passage has in view Israel’s prophesied deliverance from Babylon, but also has in mind the ultimate deliverance, brought by the Messiah.

#### **v22 – Who is Isaiah speaking to and when is he speaking of?**

Isaiah may have come out of the prophetic future into the prophetic present to speak to the people of Judah in his own day. Or he may still be speaking in the prophetic future and rebuking the hard-hearted complacency of many of the Babylonian exiles, most of whom had no interest in returning to the Promised Land.

### **v22-24 – How do God’s people become weary of Him?**

In the flesh, sometimes we regard serving and obeying the Lord as a weary thing. We feel it is a burden to serve Him. We think we are worse off for following His ways and we feel so oppressed and afflicted.

### **What is the cure for weariness in serving the Lord?**

When we feel weary, it shows we are not in step with Jesus, and His true nature.

*Matthew 11:28-30 – Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

If following God always seems like some great, weary burden — then you really aren’t following Him.

### **What is the evidence that we have grown weary?**

*You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings:* When we are weary of the LORD like this, it often shows in our giving, and in immorality (*you have burdened Me with your sins*).

### **How can God’s people be insincere in their worship?**

When the Israelites did bring offerings, they simply went through the motions of worship, and so God did not consider their empty sacrifices to be true sacrifices at all.

### **How does our weariness weary God?**

*You have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities:* Isaiah spoke to God’s people who felt “burnt out,” burdened, and weary of the Lord. God replied to them, “You feel burdened? You feel weary? Try being Me! You have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.”

### **v25 – What will God do with such a hard-hearted people?**

*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions...I will not remember your sins:* He will forgive them at the earliest opportunity. He will forget their sins. Despite all their sin and disregard for God, He still loves His people and longs for their humble return.

- Jesus’ story of the Prodigal Son illustrates of this principle. The Prodigal felt the father was a weary burden, and he went his own way. But the father still loved him and was ready to forget all his sin as soon as the Prodigal humbly returned.

### **v26-27 – What does God invite us to do?**

*Let us contend together; state your case:* God says to His people, “Do you want to justify yourself? Then do it. Present your best case.” But no matter what they say on their behalf, God has a stronger argument against them: *Your first father sinned.* “You are a child of Adam, and his sin has infected the whole human race, including yourself. You are a sinner through and through from birth. Stop trying to justify yourself and humbly look to Me for salvation.”

### **How had our mediators transgressed against God?**

People have trusted in the wrong mediators. The ones they trusted to save them before God were sinners themselves. Looking to a perfect, sinless Mediator can only save us, for *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.* (1 Timothy 2:5)

### **v28 – What would God do about the unfaithfulness of His people?**

*I will give Jacob to the curse:* Because of this deep sinfulness, and failure to look to God’s solution for sin, there was only a curse for Jacob. Because we are born in sin, and when we reject God’s Mediator, then all there is left for us is the curse and reproaches.

### **What applications come to mind from our discussion?**

- As God’s people we should not be given to fear because we are His and He loves us!
- Trials help us grow closer to the Lord and mold us to be more like Christ.
- God fulfills His prophecies and promises exactly, He is that Almighty!
- We are called to be God’s witnesses recalling the great things He has done.
- We need to forget our past failures and look forward to the new things God will do in us.
- When we find ourselves growing weary, we need to do everything we can to get closer to Jesus.
- There are consequences to unfaithfulness, repent!