

# OpenTheo

## November 30th: Isaiah 43 & Luke 9:1-17

November 29, 2021



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I have called you by name, you are mine. Sending out the Twelve and feeding the five thousand.

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## Transcript

Isaiah chapter 43. But now thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.

When you walk through fire, you shall not be burnt, And the flames shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Kush and Siba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my eyes and honored and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you.

I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth. Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears. All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble. Who among them can declare this and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right, and let them hear and say, It is true.

You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.

I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you, and you are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and I am God. Also henceforth I am he. There is none who can deliver from my hand.

I work, and who can turn it back? Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. For your sake I send to Babylon, and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.

Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior. They lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick. Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.

Behold, I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise. Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob, but you have been weary of me, O Israel.

You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with offerings, or wearied you with frankincense. You have not brought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices.

But you have burdened me with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities. I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Put me in remembrance, let us argue together, set forth your case that you may be proved right.

Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me. Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and deliver Jacob to utter destruction, and Israel to reviling. Isaiah chapter 42 spoke of the calling and equipping of the servant to establish his justice, a proof of the Lord's sovereignty over the idolaters and their false gods.

The chapter concluded, however, with the description of the sorry state of Israel,

supposed to be the Lord's servant, yet blind in death and suffering under the Lord's hand of judgment. Chapter 43 opens with God's word of hope spoken into this dark situation. The Lord is the one who first formed and created Israel, and when they have been brought low, he is the one who will raise them up again.

Once again, with words found more commonly in Isaiah than anywhere else in scripture, and which are especially found in this section of the book, the Lord tells his people, fear not, the one who first called and established them, the one who calls them by name, will also redeem them. Israel would pass through terrible trials, yet the Lord would be with them every step of that way. They would be tried, through invasion, oppression, exile, and many other such things, but they would not ultimately be destroyed or harmed.

The Lord would preserve and be with them through it all. Perhaps the greatest assurances of the Lord's commitment to his people are found in the way that he binds himself to them, in such a manner that his identity is at stake in their deliverance. In verse 3, the Lord declares his name to his people, with titles that manifest the way that he has taken them upon himself.

The Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. The identification of the Lord as the Holy One of Israel, of course, is repeated throughout the book of Isaiah, being a key unifying thread of the entire work. The Lord is the Father of his son Israel, they bear his name, and he bears their name, as he will say in chapter 49 verses 14 to 16.

Whether or not the references to Egypt, Cush, and Saba should be taken as very concrete historical references, the Lord's great love for his people is seen in history in his judgments upon great nations for the sake of their redemption. For instance, in the Exodus, the great plagues wrought upon the land of Egypt were done by the Lord in remembrance of his covenant. In particular, he speaks of these nations as Israel's ransom.

The judgment of the Lord fell especially heavily upon Egypt, for instance, in order that his people might be released. Perhaps we should see the Passover behind this, where Israel was marked out and redeemed as the Lord's firstborn son, in part through bringing death upon the firstborn of Egypt. Considering the lengths to which the Lord would go in his love for his people, we should not be surprised at his promise to bring their exiles back from the corners of the earth, restoring the people that he first created.

The Lord's returning of the exiles of Israel is a recurring theme in the book of Isaiah. Back in chapter 41, the passage opened with a trial being set up and the nations summoned to it. These trial themes continue in this chapter, as the Lord directly challenges the idols and their worshippers once more.

In chapter 42 verses 19 and 20, Israel was characterized in the following words, Who is blind but my servant? or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my

dedicated one? or blind as the servant of the Lord? He sees many things, but does not observe them. His ears are open, but he does not hear. Now the Lord says that these people should be brought forth before all of the nations, who are also assembled.

They are to give their testimony to the Lord's deity, demonstrated in the fact that he foretells and rules in the affairs of men throughout history. Even if Israel had not responded to the Lord's work as they ought to have done, they had most definitely seen it and could testify to it. They are described as his witnesses, but also as his servant.

If these terms are paralleled, the implication is that their work occurs through their experiencing of his deliverances in history and their bearing witness concerning them to the nations. The Lord is the only God. The claims of all pretenders to God's throne are shown to be hollow.

No other people can stand forward and testify of the work of their idols in their history in the same manner as Israel can do concerning the Lord's actions in theirs. The Lord is both unique and supreme. No one can rival him.

The Lord had earlier spoken of Egypt, Kush and Saba being given for Israel's ransom. Now he speaks of the Babylonians and the Chaldeans in a similar manner. The Babylonians, who would be the greatest power the world had yet known, would be overthrown and made fugitives, all on account of the Lord's steadfast commitment and concern to deliver his people.

As John Oswald aptly puts it, the deliverance of Israel is not on account of who they are, but whose they are. The Lord revealed his name and identity in the context of the exodus from Egypt, and now he is going to accomplish a new exodus. The language of verses 16 to 21 clearly refers back to this earlier exodus, presenting it as the paradigm within which the new exodus will occur.

The Lord had divided the waters of the Red Sea so that his people could pass through on dry land. Now he talks about making another way in the sea, or path in the mighty waters. The Lord had drawn out the army of the Egyptians to pursue his people and to be destroyed in the deep.

Now he will again bring forth chariots and horses, summoning them to their destruction. Yet even in this recollection of the events of their deliverance from Egypt, the Lord says, Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. What he is about to do is going to eclipse what he has done in the past.

We have similar statements in places like Jeremiah chapter 16, verses 14 and 15. Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, As the Lord lives, who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, As the Lord lives, who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country, and out of

all the countries where he had driven them. For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers.

Creating a new path through the waters, defeating their enemies, and then providing a way through the wilderness, he would bring the people back. Though figurative language, not to be fulfilled in some literalistic sense, all of this speaks to the remarkable character of the restoration of the Lord's people after the exile. We should also hear here anticipations of a greater redemption that the Lord's people would experience in history, deliverance from death itself, and the bringing in of the new creation.

None of this occurred in response to the sacrifices of Israel. In the very first chapter of the prophecy, Isaiah challenges the religious practice of the people, where they trust in ritual and are actually displeasing the Lord by their rituals that are performed with blood on their hands. The Lord there describes them as like an occupying army trampling his courts.

Even though Israel might think that they have been currying favour with the Lord by bringing forth their burnt offerings and sacrifices, in actual fact what they have been doing is bringing their sins and transgressions before him, burdening him with their sins, wearing him with their iniquities. When the Lord redeems them, it will not be on account of anything that they have done towards the Lord, anything that they have merited from his hand. Rather, it will be purely for the Lord's own sake, out of his own love for his people.

If they have any doubt about this, they should bring forth the evidence. Israel has been sinning from the time of their first forefathers, and the people who have mediated between them and the Lord, the priests and the prophets and others, have all transgressed against the Lord. Even Moses, the great mediator of the Exodus, was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land because of his sin.

If they want to know why judgement is falling upon the priests and the temple, and why the nation is being delivered up to destruction, this is why. A question to consider, what do passages like this teach us about the way that the sacrificial system worked? Luke 9 1-17 And he called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to heal.

And he said to them, Take nothing for your journey, no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.

And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Now Herod the Tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was

perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. Herod said, John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him.

On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing.

Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place. But he said to them, You give them something to eat. They said, We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.

For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each. They did so.

And had them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces. In Luke chapter 9 Jesus calls the twelve together, gives them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and sends them out to proclaim the kingdom.

They are sent out in many respects like spies preparing for a later conquest. They will be those who prepare the way for the later mission of the church. And they are sent without provisions.

They are dependent upon the people to whom they are sent for their sustenance and their supplies. Among other things this is a test of hospitality. As we see in the story of Sodom or the story of Rahab and Jericho.

In the story of Sodom for instance there is a juxtaposition between the story of Abraham in the preceding chapter, in chapter 18, and the story of chapter 19 where the hospitality of Abraham is seen in sharp contrast with the inhospitality of the city of Sodom. If they are not welcomed they will shake the dust off their feet. It marks the place out for judgment in the future.

And as they go they extend the message of the kingdom. They are calling people to repent in preparation for the coming reign of the Lord. It's a message that will be confirmed by the signs that they perform, the miracles and the casting out of demons.

And news of all of this comes to Herod. Herod hears that some think that Jesus is John the Baptist resurrected and he wants to hear him. There is clearly a resemblance between the two characters.

As John the Baptist performed no mighty signs we must presume that the resemblance was chiefly in the content of their teaching and the manner of their teaching. They are both people who teach with boldness and authority. The apostles return from their mission and they have the news of their success and with Jesus they go to a deserted location near Bethsaida to rest for a while.

They need time to refresh themselves, to regain their strength. They are followed by crowds and Jesus teaches them concerning the kingdom and then heals. However as the day goes on they need to get food.

They are in a desolate place and they need to go to the surrounding villages to buy something to eat. But Jesus challenges his disciples to give the crowd something to eat. All they have however is five loaves and two fish.

In the five loaves we might recall the five loaves of 1 Samuel chapter 21 which David received when he was fleeing from Saul. On that occasion in 1 Samuel chapter 21 verse 3 David asked Himalek, Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever is here. Jesus is a new David who is going to provide for his people.

Jesus instructs his disciples to get the crowd to sit down and they sit down in groups of fifty. They are numbered as men only as well. This suggests that they are like a military company.

Israel left Egypt and entered Canaan in fifties in Exodus chapter 13 verse 18 and Joshua chapter 1 verse 14. And in that occasion as well they were numbered apart from women and children. In Exodus chapter 12 verse 37.

We might perhaps consider the way that there are themes of Exodus at play here. They are being given bread in the wilderness as Israel was fed by manna in Exodus chapter 16. In Exodus chapter 18 Israel was divided into thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens under appointed leaders.

This chapter is very much concerned with the twelve apostles. Jesus among other things is instructing his disciples to take leadership in his name over the crowd. He is here then preparing them for their later ministry.

He is highlighting their role as ministers acting on his behalf towards the flock of which he is the chief shepherd. And his action with the loaves highlights Eucharistic themes. This is like the Lord's Supper.

He takes, he blesses, he breaks and he gives it to his disciples to distribute to the crowd.

The same sort of language is found in Luke chapter 22 verse 19 as the supper is instituted. We've seen ways in which Jesus could be compared to David here.

Also ways in which he could be compared to Moses. There are also ways in which he could be compared with Elisha. Elisha performed a multiplication of loaves in 2 Kings chapter 4 verses 42-44.

Jesus here performs a similar miracle and the parallels are very easy to hear but it's performed in a much larger scale. Instead of 100 men you have 100 groups of 50 men. Elisha's company has, as it were, grown into a great army.

Also as we just read about John the Baptist and the speculation that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead, we might think about the connection between the ministry of John the Baptist and Elijah and the way that the relationship between the ministry of John the Baptist and Christ is similar to that between Elijah and Elisha. Jesus' performing of an Elisha-like miracle at this point may cast the succession of Jesus from the Elijah-like John in sharper relief. The story of the feeding of the 5000 is told in each of the four Gospels.

It is obviously a very significant event. Prior to the Passion Week there are very few events that are found in each one of the Gospels. But yet this one is.

It suggests that we should meditate upon its significance. Each Gospel also includes the detail of the 12 baskets of fragments gathered up afterwards. We are not merely told that many fragments were gathered up.

It's important that there were 12 baskets of fragments gathered up. Why 12? We could maybe think of an association with the fullness of Israel. Under the leadership of the 12 apostles here we have a great company, a military-like company, and maybe they're associated with a new Israel being formed at this point.

Perhaps we should also see that each one of the 12 has a basket apiece. In keeping with the themes of this chapter as Jesus has sent out the 12 and also commissioned them to feed the multitude in his name, we might think about the way in which this is a lesson to them about their partaking in the ministry of Christ. This is also something that happens as they have returned from their mission.

They were sent out at the beginning of the chapter, then they returned, and now perhaps they're being given a sign about a different stage of their mission. The initial stage was one of proclamation. They are, as it were, heralds sent out with a message concerning the coming Kingdom.

However, their ministry will extend beyond that. Their ministry will also be that of shepherds. They will have to feed a flock, and Jesus, I believe, is preparing them for that ministry at this point here.



A question to consider. Within this passage we've seen the way that the ministry of John the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus are connected. We've seen the way Christ has commissioned and empowered his disciples for the ministry of proclamation.

And we've also seen how as chief shepherd he prepares and equips the shepherds under him to provide for the flock. In each of these things we're seeing the ministry of Christ connected with the ministry of other persons. How can we understand our own vocations as Christians as connected with the ministry of Christ? How might this passage illumine our understanding of this?