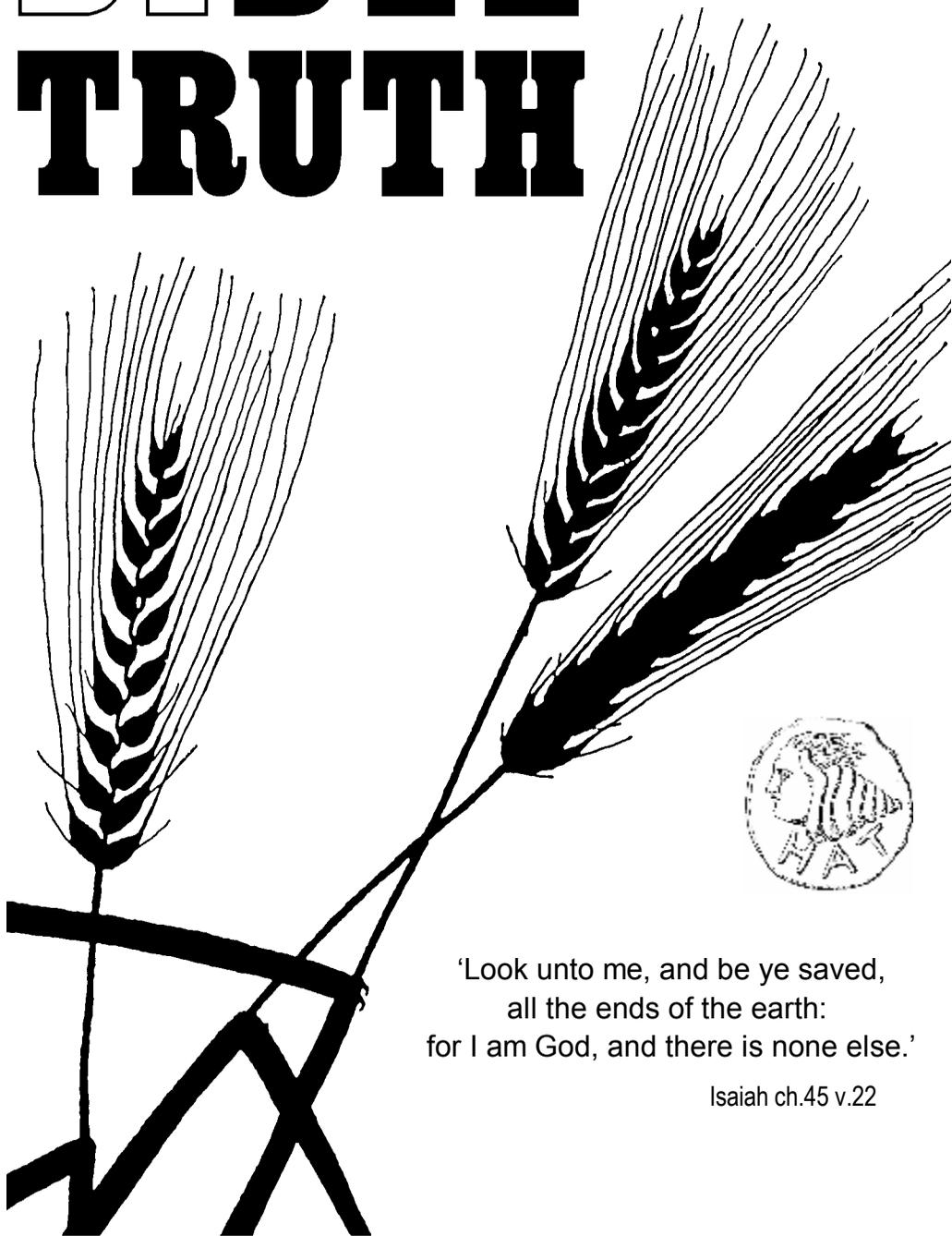


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'Look unto me, and be ye saved,
all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else.'

Isaiah ch.45 v.22

FEAR THOU NOT

BY THE LATE PASTOR JOHN H HILKER

'Fear not!' We find those words repeated over and over again in the Scriptures. They are encouraging words, spoken time after time by God Himself. Many times these words were addressed to individuals, at other times however, they were spoken to God's people, Israel. Here we will place emphasis upon God's encouraging words given to them, as related in the Book of Isaiah ch.41.

As an overview of the chapter, first of all, note that in the beginning (vv.1-7) and at the end (vv.21-29), the Lord is dealing with various nations, those who would be worshippers of idols and followers of heathen ways, calling them into account and asking them to produce their cause. But in vv.8-20, the Lord speaks specifically to His Israel people, mentioning several times the word, 'Fear thou not'. The whole tenor of this passage is one of encouragement, strength, help and comfort. It reveals that God has a people whom He has not cast away; a people chosen by Him, who were to be blessed and used by Him.

It stands to reason that when God called and chose His people He had a purpose and plan in mind, and that purpose was for His service. God calls, then He anoints and empowers for service that particular person or nation whom He calls. While there may be some variance in Bible chronology, the date of 712 BC will be accepted as the time Isaiah ch.41 was written. If we think of 721 BC as being the captivity date, the whole Northern House of Israel either had gone into captivity or was about to go into captivity, depending upon the date one might choose to accept. Therefore, Isaiah uses some very humbling rhetoric in this chapter as he brings God's Word to Israel.

Beginning with Isaiah ch.41 v.8 we note the words, 'But thou, Israel...'. Quite often the prophets would interject the term 'But thou ...', when the message ceased to apply to other peoples, but was directed to Israel. If we try to avoid those portions of Scripture which are directed to God's special people, we may as well eliminate the Scriptures themselves. God says that He made the New Covenant with the same people with whom He made the Old Covenant but there are many people mentioned in the Scriptures with whom God did not enter into covenantal relationship. God's sovereign hand is

still in the affairs of all people and He does have authority over them, but He did not come into the same type of covenantal relationship with them as He did with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. The whole essence of Scripture is based on the Covenants which God made with His people; and they are Blood Covenants!

In Isaiah ch.41 v.8, we are told, 'But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend'.

There are many who have come to realise the importance of God's Covenants with His people, and this very awakening has led many Anglo-Saxon-Celtic peoples to discover their own identity as being of the very promised seed of Abraham and as being of the true Israel of God.

Consider these two quotes from commentaries which I think are interesting.

'The nation of Israel was the recipient of those distinguishing mercies which could alone account for their national redemption and their spiritual condition.'

Abraham and Jacob are God's chosen ones as founders, and first-fathers, of the Israelite race. By this we are to understand that they were selected, in the Divine wisdom, as having just the qualities which, developed in a race, would make a people precisely fitted to carry out His purposes. We are not to understand that in a way of accident or in a way of mere sovereignty these first fathers were picked out. God's choices are never arbitrary; they are always judicious selections.

'The race is described as God's servant and His elect or, combining the two characters, His chosen servant, chosen to be His servant. This special relation to Jehovah is the thing which distinguishes the people of Israel from the heathen nations around them.'

These are timely quotes and should focus our attention on the fact that the Christian nations of the world were to be different. They were to be a contrast to the nations of darkness and were to be fruitful for God's Kingdom. It's interesting to note that the American Supreme Court has ruled that they are a Christian nation, and it is true that the Anglo-Saxon-Celtic and kindred nations are composed of the major portion of Christians. We see in this God's faithfulness to His Covenant with us, His Israel people.

'... Thou are my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away'. (v.9)

Did God put the Israel people into captivity? Yes. Did He divorce them? Yes. Did He also redeem them and buy them back, not utterly casting them off forever? Yes!

'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.' (v.10)

God assured Israel of His faithfulness. He promised to infuse strength into them; but He would infuse weakness into their enemies. He would give them external aid; He would make them a threshing instrument to scatter their foes; His spiritual refreshment would support them, even amidst any suffering that they might have. It is a tremendous message; and Isaiah, no doubt, was overjoyed to receive this message which he was called to bring.

Matthew Henry, the great English scholar and minister of the late 1600s and early 1700s, paraphrased v.10 in this way,

'Fear thou not, for I am with thee, not only within call, but present with thee; be not dismayed at the power of those who are against thee, for I am thy God, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? I will strengthen thee. Art thou destitute of friends? I will keep thee in time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispensing rewards and punishments'.

It is beautiful to think of these words and to be able to apply them to our own nation, for we are the Covenant People of the Bible. Therefore we can lay hold upon the promises of God and fear not. But if all the Covenants and Promises apply to some other people, what hope do we have?

In the *Amplified* translation, the word 'dismayed' in v.10 is translated 'to look around'. We read, 'fear not [there is nothing to fear] for I am with you; do not look around you in terror and be dismayed, for I am your God I will strengthen and harden you [to difficulties]'.

Verse 11 continues,

'Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing ...'.

The *Amplified Translation* renders this,

'Behold, all they who are enraged and inflamed against you shall be put to shame and confounded.'

This is one more reason for us to fear not. It does not mean we should not be aware of what is going on, or that we do not have concern for our families and for our nation. David was concerned for the nation, as were Jeremiah and all of the prophets. But it does mean that we should not have inordinate fear or allow such a fear to dictate our actions. There are those who bring out so much of the negative and fear of what the enemy might be doing that Christians are apt to run off in all directions and do things which will be foolish in the long run. The Lord has different ways of dealing with us as individuals; but the Scriptures are very specific as to how God dealt with the nation of Israel. They attest to the fact that He preserved and delivered His people many times, even when it seemed as if there was no hope; even when Israel did not deserve to be delivered!

Why are there so many 'Fear nots' spoken to Israel? It must be because they are so susceptible to fear. The word 'redeemer' in v.14 is the same word for 'redeemer' that is used in the books of the law when referring to the near kinsman. He was the 'Goel' or 'Goel', or the avenger of blood, who had the right to slay a murderer if he were caught outside of the city of refuge: So here in Isaiah, 'Thy redeemer' has the meaning of the one who is nearest of kin, or the avenger of innocent blood.

He is also the same Redeemer that Job mentions.

'For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:' Job ch.19 vv.25-26

Again, He is the same 'Redeemer' spoken of by the Psalmist.

'Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.'
Psalm 19 v.14

Then Isaiah refers to this Redeemer as 'the Holy One of Israel'. This expression is one of Isaiah's favourite terms by which he shows God's Covenantal relationship to His people. The prophet Zechariah used the term 'the Lord of hosts' to express a similar relationship of God to His people. Thus our dependence upon our God is strengthened by these Names of endearment.

There are those who predict dire things for our nation and advise people to make special preparations for the times ahead. Each in his own situation must do what he thinks is right to do, as the Lord leads; but I believe that, because of the New Covenant, our nation will be spared many things and will experience a glorious salvation by the intervention of God, through Jesus Christ.

I think that Jesus taught clearly in His parables that ‘the wheat’, ‘the good fish’, ‘the righteous nations’, etc., would be spared. At every opportunity He used words of comfort and encouragement to try to instil faith, not fear, into His disciples. Furthermore, Jesus promised that the elect would be saved. I’ve always liked the Apostle Paul’s statement of faith given during a time of storm and shipwreck, in which he said,

‘Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me’.

Acts ch.27 v.25

What, therefore, shall we do? Consider a passage of Scripture that is a favourite of mine.

‘Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.’

Proverbs ch.3 vv.5-6

The Lord will give the right leading at the appropriate time to those who place their faith and trust in Him. We need not be engulfed in fear. Note that the Lord gives this counsel to His disciples, and this was just prior to His crucifixion.

‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’

John ch.14 v. 27

The disciples needed this counsel and we need it today. We must stay in the Word, believe the Lord, and ‘Fear not’.
