

Handout: Isaiah Lesson 15

In Chapter 40, Isaiah gave us the foundation for chapters 41-66:

1. God's people will be redeemed and will return to their homeland.
2. God will prepare the way for their return.
3. God will tenderly shepherd His people on the journey of their new Exodus as a shepherd cares for his flock.
4. God has the power to do this because He created the universe, and He will give His people what they need to accomplish whatever He plans for them.

In chapters 41:1-20 and 41:21-43:7 there are two parallel and complementary trial scenes in three parts. See the use of the legal term "riv" ("a case against, contend against") in 41:11 and 21.

1. The summons to trial and judgment (41:1 and 41:21)
2. The legal questioning (41:2-4 and 41:22-29)
3. The reprieve in a restatement of divine election and reassurance of future salvation (41:8-20 and 43:1-13)

In Chapter 41, Yahweh, through Isaiah, answers the people's doubts expressed in 40:27b when Yahweh knew they were saying "My way is hidden from Yahweh, my rights are ignored by my God." He answers them by foretelling the coming of a liberator who will not be named until 44:28. The deliverance described by Isaiah in Chapter 41:1-29 contains three major aspects:

1. Isaiah introduces God's plan to rescue His people (41:1-7).
2. Isaiah describes Israel as the Yahweh's servant (41:8-20).
3. Isaiah makes God's case against false gods (41:21-29).

What do we learn about the unnamed man in 41:2-3?

1. He will be summoned by God and will come from the east (verse 2).
2. His strength will be so great that nations will fall before him (verse 2).
3. He will come swiftly with his army (verse 3).

The expressions "I AM" and "the first and the last" are found several times in the literal Hebrew text of Isaiah chapters 40-48. "I AM" suggests the meaning of the Divine Name, Yahweh, as explained to Moses in Exodus 3:14. In the Book of Isaiah see "I AM" in 41:4; 43:10, 11, 12, and 13 (some translation have I AM in 13 twice); 46:4; 48:12 (twice). See "the First and the Last" in 41:1; 43:10 = concept; 44:6; 48:12. The same expressions also appear in the Book of Revelation:

- The terms occur together as "I AM the Alpha and Omega (first and last letters in the Greek alphabet which express the idea of "the First and the Last" in Revelation 1:8.
- In Revelation 2:8 the expression "the First and the Last" is used in the letter to the Christians of Smyrna and is linked to the death and resurrection of Jesus, which suggests that the impact of Jesus' death and resurrection spans all human history.
- In Revelation 22:13 the three parallel expressions, "the Alpha and Omega," "the first and the last," and "the Beginning and the End," summarize St. John's description of history's climatic conclusion with the Second Advent of Christ, the Last Judgment and the ushering in of God's eternal Kingdom.

Jesus will use the words “I AM” as an expression of His divinity 26 times. He will use it in 7 different metaphors, each used with a predicate nominative, and also in 4 statements without a predicate nominative in St. John’s Gospel:

“I AM” with predicate nominative		“I AM” without predicate nominative	
1. Jn 6:35	<i>“I AM the bread of life”</i>	1. Jn 8:24	<i>“..if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.</i>
2. Jn 8:12	<i>“I AM the light of the world”</i>	2. Jn 8:28	<i>“When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I AM (He).*”</i>
3. Jn 10:7	<i>“I AM the gate for the sheep”</i>	3. Jn 8:58	<i>“In all truth (Amen, amen) I tell you, before Abraham ever was, I AM.”</i>
4. Jn 10:11	<i>“I AM the good shepherd”</i>	4. Jn 13:19	<i>“I tell you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe that I AM (He).*”</i>
5. Jn 11:25	<i>“I AM the resurrection and the life”</i>	5. Mk 14:61b-62a	<i>The high priest put a second question to him saying, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” “I AM,” said Jesus ...</i>
6. Jn 14:6	<i>“I AM the way and the truth and the life”</i>		
7. Jn 15:1	<i>“I AM the true vine”</i>		

* the pronoun “He” is not in the Greek text

Chapter 42:1-7 (5-12) is the first of Isaiah’s four “Servant Songs.” The others are Isaiah 49:1-6; 50:4-9 (10-11); and 52:13-53:12. The first Servant’s Song can be divided into two parts:

- First, Isaiah describes the ministry of the Servant anointed with God’s Spirit (verses 1-7).
- Second, Isaiah describes the Servant’s Lord who empowers him in his mission (verses 8-9).

In verses 1-7 the Servant is presented as:

1. A gentle prophet of God with a divine mission and a divine destiny (verses 4 and 6).
2. He is anointed with the Spirit of God (verse 1).
3. His mission is to reach the entire world in spite of opposition (verses 1-4).
4. His mission transcends that of other prophets since he is both covenant and light as he performs a mission of liberation and salvation (verses 6-7).

The last verses of Isaiah chapter 42 express the themes of triumph, judgment, and indictment:

1. God has triumphed and He deserves a hymn of praise from all peoples of the earth (verses 10-13).
2. God judges those who persist in idolatry (verses 14-17).
3. God chastises His wayward servant, Israel, describing the sin that had led to their exile (18-25).