

# Good News to Share #1

## Isaiah 43 v 16-21

### Context:

Today's is the first of two consecutive studies entitled 'Good News to Share' and we welcome Dan Holland from Through Faith Missions to preach on the first of the two. His text is Isaiah 43 v 16-21 which is part of a much larger section of this Old Testament book. God's people, Israel, had suffered a catastrophic defeat at the hands of Babylon resulting in the destruction of the Temple and the deportation of most of the population into an exile from the Promised Land lasting 70 years. Though all this devastation was a consequence of the people's persistent rebellion against God and their failure to live faithfully in covenant with him, and though it had all been prophesied many times before it eventually happened, nevertheless, the people felt God had permanently abandoned them and there was no hope that things would ever get better. What they would have given for a return to the good old days! And yet, in his sovereign mercy and grace, God had not washed his hands of his people and was planning something spectacular for them – good news for those with ears to hear.

### Observation:

1. What acts does God recall in v 16-17 and who was responsible for them?
2. What command does God give in v 18?
3. On what basis does he make this command according to the beginning of v 19?
4. What is the 'new thing' God is doing according to the rest of v 19?
5. Who will honour God because of his actions according to the beginning of v 20?
6. How is Israel described at the end of v 20 and what does God promise to do for them?
7. How is Israel described in v 21 and what is their purpose?

### Meaning:

1. From your knowledge of the story of the Old Testament, what specific event from Israel's past history is being referred to in v 16-17?
2. What significance did this event have for the way Israel understood itself and its relationship with God?
3. So, why would the command in v 18 be so shocking for Israel to hear?
4. Why does God make the command of v 18, according to v 19, and what does that tell us about the event that God is about to bring about for Israel?
5. When you read this text in the wider context of the Book of Isaiah, it is clear that the 'new thing' being referred to here is the miraculous and merciful return of Israel from exile in Babylon to the Promised Land, and in v 19-20 God uses the provision of life-giving water as a symbol to describe this act of grace. Read 43 v 25 and 44 v 3 and discuss what two spiritual blessings God promises his people as they return.
6. How were these two promises eventually fulfilled for us in the New Testament and why is this such good news?
7. How do you think Israel would have felt being called 'my chosen' at the end of v 20, despite their sin and guilt? In the New Testament book of 1 Peter, Christians are referred to several times with this same language of being 'chosen' or 'elect' (see 1 Peter 1 v 1, 2 v 9). What do you think this means and how does it make you feel about yourself?

8. In v 21 God tells Israel that he had created them as a nation for himself with the purpose of proclaiming his praise. In 1 Peter 2 v 9 God says something very similar to Christians individually and the Church corporately. What do you think it means for us to '*declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*'? Do you think this has an evangelistic element to it?

### **Application:**

1. Israel's identity was shaped by the great acts of the exodus from Egypt and the return from exile in Babylon. To what extent is our identity as Christians shaped by the great acts of the death/resurrection of Jesus (43 v 25) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (44 v 3)?
2. The Bible teaches that as Christians we are 'chosen' by God. How can we make sure this stunning truth doesn't make us unhealthily proud and inward looking?
3. In v 19 God encourages Israel to perceive the new thing that was springing up, and though the 'new thing' referred to finds its specific meaning first in the context of Israel's return from exile and second in the coming of Jesus, it is also true to say that God is always doing new things in our lives, in his church, and in the world, and if we dwell too much on the past we may miss them. So, as you look ahead to 2024, what new things do you perceive God may be doing and how might you embrace them?

### **Pray:**

- Thank God for his promises to us fulfilled in Jesus.
- For God's grace to perceive the new things he is doing.
- For God's grace to fulfil our calling as his chosen people to proclaim his praises in the world.

### **Sermon Notes:**