

Lesson 24 Isaiah 42:18-43:21 Release from Bondage

Introduction

Isaiah							
"He will lift up a standard for the nations...he will set a sign among the peoples."							
Book of the Servant 40-55							
The Redemption of Israel 42:18-44:23							
Release from Bondage 42:18-43:21				Forgiveness of Sins 43:22-44:23			
Israel, the Blind Servant 42:18-25	Disaster Reversed: Israel Redeemed 43:1-7	The Certainty of What the Lord has Promised 43:8-13	Redemption from Babylon: A New Exodus 43:14-21	Sin Exposed 43:22-24	The Past Forgotten, the Future Blessed 43:25-44:5	The Certainty of the Lord's Promise 44:6-20	The Blessedness of Israel in the Redeeming Lord 44:21-23

Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (InterVarsity Press, 1996).

In our last lesson we completed "The Consolation of the World", the first major section of the Book of the Servant. That section concluded with the beautiful poetry of Isaiah 42:1-17. That passage included both the first of four servant songs and the first of three hymns of praise. The Consolation of the World began with God famously exhorting His messengers, "Comfort, O comfort my people." These concluding songs tell us comfort will come through a special servant and will result in shouts of glory to God from the mountaintop. Not only do the servant song and hymn of praise conclude our section on consolation, they also provide a preface for the next major section of the Book of the Servant, titled, "The Redemption of Israel"; a preface, or a transition. The themes at the end of our consolation section flow right into our redemption section. Here are a few quotes from the servant song and the hymn of praise to remind you of the language that we will pick up again in our new section.

We are introduced to the special Servant in 42:1-4. Verse 1,

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| <p>¹ "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
I have put My Spirit upon Him;</p> | <p>My chosen one <i>in whom</i> My soul delights.
He will bring forth justice to the nations.</p> |
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Then in verses 6-8, speaking about the Servant.

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| <p>⁶ "I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness,
and I will watch over You and I will appoint You</p> <p>⁷ To open blind eyes,</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.</p> <p>⁸ "I am the LORD, that is My name;</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">Nor My praise to graven images.</p> | <p>I will also hold You by the hand
as a covenant to the people and a light to the
nations,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon</p> <p>I will not give My glory to another,
I will not leave them undone."</p> <p>Who trust in idols,
"You are our gods."</p> |
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The introduction of the Servant is followed by the hymn of praise in 42:10-17. Verses 16-17,

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| <p>¹⁰ Sing to the LORD a new song,
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it.</p> <p>¹⁶ "I will lead the blind by a way they do not know,
I will make darkness into light before them</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">These are the things I will do and I</p> <p>¹⁷ They will be turned back <i>and</i> be utterly put
to shame,
Who say to molten images,</p> | <p><i>Sing</i> His praise from the end of the earth!
You islands, and those who dwell on them.
In paths they do not know I will guide them.
And rugged places into plains.</p> <p>I will not leave them undone."</p> <p>Who trust in idols,
"You are our gods."</p> |
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Much of this language - Servant, chosen, Spirit, covenant, blind, prisoners, my name, my glory, graven images, praise, shame, and idols – is all going to reappear in this next section that we're just starting: Isaiah 42:18-44:23. It is the section that Motyer calls, "The Redemption of Israel." Looking even further ahead, after that section, all this language will set us up for the final two major sections

of the Book of the Servant, two sections on deliverance that Motyer calls, “The Great Deliverance,” and, “The Greater Deliverance.”

This idea of double deliverance was already introduced in our first section, the Consolation of the World. We see it in the two reasons for comfort. The people are going to need comforting because they are going into exile. They are also going to need comforting because they are a sinful people who brought God’s wrath onto their own heads. Moving into this present second section, those same two ideas are going to make up to subsections. We are calling this, “The Redemption of Israel.” Well, redemption from what? First, Israel needs to be redeemed from captivity in Babylon. That is not going to be enough to restore or guarantee relationship with God. They are going to need redemption from sin. Isaiah gives us a double need for comfort in the first section, a double need for redemption in the second section, and then when he describes the double deliverance, he is not going to do it in one section; he is going to expand those two ideas out and give each gets its own section, the Great Deliverance, and, the Greater Deliverance. The two halves of our present section are pointing us ahead to those two concluding sections of the Book of the Servant.

This development of themes through restatement is integral to Isaiah’s style. At the most detailed level of verse and verset, this is a hallmark of all Hebrew poetry. Parallel versets that appear synonymous almost never are. The restatement of a theme is not saying the exact same thing. The restatement of a theme in a second verset almost always adds more to the picture, heightening, intensifying, or developing the idea that was presented in the first verset.

That’s the most detailed level where we see this development through restatement. We see that kind of development through restated themes at every level in Isaiah. So, to go to the highest level of structure, we divided Isaiah into three books, the Book of the King, the Book of the Servant, the Book of the Conqueror. Isaiah introduces themes in one book that he later develops in the next book. For example, he declared very early on in the Book of the King that Judah’s sin would be dealt with, “though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow (1:18).” And we got a picture of atonement in 6:7, when the angel touched a burning coal to Isaiah’s lips to forgive his sin. But Isaiah’s focus in that book was the King. You know, the coming child. We need an ideal King, because the bad kings of Israel and the good kings of Israel just aren’t cutting it. So we have this introduction of a theme of atonement, but Isaiah gives no explanation to how Israelites are going to be washed clean or how Isaiah’s sin was burned away. He is building up to address the “how” of atonement by the end of the Book of the Servant.

That’s an example of introducing themes and restating them for development at the highest level, you know, between the books of Isaiah. Isaiah introduces (and later develops) themes at every level, not just from book to book, but section to section, sub-section to sub-section, passage to passage, verse to verse, verset to verset. Our current section, the redemption of Israel, is a fantastic example of this style.

We are going to have two subsections to the Redemption of Israel. Motyer calls the first, “Release from Bondage,” and the second, “Forgiveness of Sin.” And I’ve already said how these two sub-sections are going to get picked up for later development in the Great Deliverance and the Greater Deliverance. As we focus in on the sub-sections, we are going to see a lot of restatement and development. The sub-sections have parallel structures. So, each contains four passages, and those four passages match each other. So, in the first half and the second half we’ll follow the structure.

First, we encounter the sin of Israel.

Second, God promises salvation.

Third, God declares His uniqueness in contrast to false gods,

And fourth, God describes the salvation He has promised.

And in this, we are going to see the repetition of themes such as glory, redemption, blindness, knowledge, Servant, witness, water, and fire. All that language is going to be repeated in each sub-

section. It's not all going to be the same thing; it's going to be developed. And as we do this, we will encounter three meta-themes that we already encountered in the Consolation of the World section. First, the theme that God is unique. He is incomparable. Isaiah develops this theme both by lifting up God's character and actions, and also unmasking the impotence of false gods. God stands apart. He is unique.

Second, God saves His people. God saves His people from physical calamity. He also saves His people from spiritual bondage.

Third, God works through His servant. In our present section, God does all the action Himself. Only Israel is identified as servant. We're not looking at the special Servant that we're going to see later. Israel's one job in this section is to witness to the saving character and action of God. So those themes especially, those two themes will be developed through these four passages.

I am going to make sure I get through the four passages of the first half of the Redemption of Israel in this lesson, and then the four parallel passages of the second half of the Redemption of Israel in the next lesson. And I'm going to do that so we can be sure to keep in mind these that Isaiah is developing through repetition.

Ok. So, now we are ready for the first half of the redemption of Israel which we're calling, "Release From Bondage." This is Isaiah 42:18-43:21. We start with our first of our passages, the sin of Israel in 42:18-25. I'm not going to read all at once. I'm going to comment on this first passage as I go. We start with verses 18-20.

Israel, the Blind Servant (42:18-25)

¹⁸ Hear, you deaf!	And look, you blind, that you may see.
¹⁹ Who is blind but My servant, Who is so blind as he that is at peace <i>with Me</i> ,	Or so deaf as My messenger whom I send? Or so blind as the servant of the LORD?
²⁰ You have seen many things, but you do not observe <i>them</i> ;	<i>Your</i> ears are open, but none hears.

Now, this is ironic: a blind and deaf messenger. Not the best messenger. This blind and deaf servant is not, of course, the ideal Servant of the Servant songs. This is Israel as God's servant. They "have seen many things but do not observe them." Their "ears are open, but none hears." We've seen this motif through Isaiah, starting back in chapter 6 when God originally called Isaiah. He was sent to a people who "keep on listening, but do not perceive, keep on looking, but do not understand." They are deaf and blind. It is a description of Israel's spiritual state.

There is another connection here to chapter 6. When God called Isaiah, he asked, "Who shall I send?" Isaiah answered, "Here am I, send me." Speaking collectively of Israel here, God asks, "Who is so deaf as my messenger whom I send?" All of Israel is supposed to be a messenger to God, not just Isaiah. Isaiah is a special messenger. But the people are deaf and blind. How can deaf and blind people be a useful messenger?

In the next two verses, Isaiah contrasts the Lord's purpose for Israel with the failure of the nation to embrace that purpose.

²¹ The LORD was pleased for His righteousness' sake	To make the law great and glorious.
²² But this is a people plundered and despoiled; Or are hidden away in prisons;	All of them are trapped in caves, And a spoil, with none to say, "Give <i>them</i> back!"
They have become a prey with none to deliver them	

What happened? The Law is supposed to be great and glorious. But this people, they are hiding in caves. They're trapped in prisons. There is something wrong here. To be faithful messengers, the people of Israel needed to embrace and live out the Word of God themselves. Moses explained that purpose of the Law in Deuteronomy 4:5-7.

Who is God talking to? He is talking to blind and deaf Israel. He is talking to the servant who has turned away from Him, who has been unfaithful, who He Himself has sent into exile. I so much want to take this passage and apply it to myself. I want to hear God saying to me,

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed [you Michael]; I have called you by name; you are Mine!
² “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

I want that to be about me, about my redemption from sin, about God knowing my name, about God claiming me for Himself. I want it to be an assurance to me, that know matter what waters I must cross or fires I must pass through, God will hold onto me. He will protect me. And I may get to the point where I am able to apply this passage to me. And I believe these truths do apply to me and Christ. But to apply this passage to ourselves, we have to do it indirectly from the original intention of this passage. This was not originally written for us. This was written for Israel. And we still have to ask, redeemed from what? Passing through what waters? What fire?

So thinking about the original meaning in the original context, what does verse 2a remind you of?

² “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.

What could Isaiah be thinking of when he talks about passing through the water? How about rivers not overflowing you? What does that mean? What does that refer to?

And then think about the parallel 2b.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you.

What fire? What flame would Israel fear? Let’s read a little more. Verses 3-5a.

³ “For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place.
⁴ “Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you,
I will give *other* men in your place and *other* peoples in exchange for your life.
⁵ “Do not fear, for I am with you;

Now what could that mean? Egypt as your ransom? Cush and Seba in your place? For the current poetic purpose Egypt, Cush and Seba are all basically the same place: greater Egypt, including the whole of the upper and lower Nile. Why bring Egypt into this passage? How can Egypt ransom Israel? How can Cush take Israel’s place?

When we think of redemption, we think of the Biblical concept of being bought back or being ransomed. As Christians, our minds immediately jump to Jesus. We know that Jesus became our ransom. He was the price paid to redeem us out of our bondage to sin. He took our place. That’s the point of the cross. I deserve to die for my sins. That is the price on my head. That is the right penalty. We all do. Jesus paid that penalty. Jesus gave His life in exchange for our lives. That’s the Gospel. Jesus paid the ransom. He Himself is the ransom.

But how can Egypt ransom Israel, or Cush take her place? How can peoples be given in exchange for the life of Israel? That does not make sense. At least, it does not make sense as a parallel to redemption for sin. Egypt, Cush, all the peoples have to pay for their own sins. They cannot take Israel’s place. Only a sinless man can do that. Only Jesus. This must be something else. Some other kind of redemption must be in mind here.

5b-7 lets us know what kind of redemption we are talking about.

I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west.
⁶ “I will say to the north, ‘Give *them* up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold *them* back.’

Bring My sons from afar
7 Everyone who is called by My name,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”
And My daughters from the ends of the earth,
And whom I have created for My glory,

When will God bring the offspring of Israel from the east and gather them from the west, calling to north and south, “Give them back”? This is the return from the Babylonian exile. The greater number of Jews from Judea were carried off to Babylon in the northeast. Some fled to Egypt. In reality, Jews fled in all directions. God is calling them home.

Going back to the earlier question, when you read verse 2, what do you think of?

2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
Nor will the flame burn you.

I think there are three interconnected references here. “Passing through the waters” makes me think of Moses leading Israel through the Red Sea. The reference to Egypt in verse 3 enhances that connection. But the “rivers overflowing” takes me back to Isaiah 8 and the image of Assyria as the mighty Euphrates River overflowing into Judah. To understand the fire reference, we just have to go back to the end of the previous passage describing Israel’s sin and God’s wrath. This is 42:25,

25 So He poured out on him the heat of His anger
And it set him aflame all around, yet he did not recognize it;
And the fierceness of battle;
And it burned him, but he paid no attention.

The fire is the wrath of God, unleashed by a conquering army. These images all intersect. Reference to Egypt reminds us of Israel’s bondage and the Exodus that followed. God called His people out of slavery. That’s going to happen again. God is going to call a future people, exiled to Babylon, out of their bondage. Why are they in bondage? They were taken away as a result of God’s burning anger against their sin. According to 42:25a, that heat of that anger is the fierceness of battle. The conquering army that will set fire to Israel’s cities is the agent of God’s wrath. They will carry the people of Israel off.

But God has not forgotten Israel. He will redeem them. So, the first meaning of passing through the water and through the fire is the metaphor of the exodus out of Egypt. But we see that it’s speaking about something in the future. So that’s one meaning in the past that’s looking ahead to the future as a metaphor: now we can think about that double meaning for the future. God has not forgotten Israel. He will redeem them. We can imagine passing through water and fire in two ways, both in a calamity that will surely come and some will survive, and also in calamity that is going to be avoided as God brings them back. One generation will pass through great suffering in the days of their exile, and yet, they will not be totally destroyed. Many will indeed die, but as a nation they will survive. They will pass through water. They will pass through fire. They will not all die. And even though their suffering is self-inflicted, God promises, “You are mine. I will be with you. You are precious in my sight. I have redeemed you. I will bring your offspring back.” Notice that last promise. “I will bring your offspring back.” So, the prophecy here is not that this generation will not go into exile. They have to pass through water and fire. There will be a future offspring that will be redeemed out of that bondage. That promise of national redemption is for the offspring that will one day return to Israel when God’s timing is right. So here’s this other meaning of the water and fire. That generation will not be stopped by sea or river, and will not be consumed by the fire of a vengeful army. I think that’s the primary meaning of the text. You know, there is the water and fire with the metaphor coming out of Egypt, and then there’s the water and fire that happens to the generation that is exiled, but I think what is being promised here is the coming back, and water and fire not being able to stop this generation. “I will take them through the Red Sea or across the river, and there will be no vengeful army ready to consume them.” He will bring them home.

Okay, so in this passage the context of redemption is not redemption from the spiritual bondage of sin. This is a promise of future national redemption from exile that is, in a way, similar to the former national redemption of the exodus from Egypt.

So, in our first passage, Isaiah described the sin of Israel. In this second passage, God promised salvation from exile in Babylon. In the third passage, God will declare His uniqueness. And it is His uniqueness as the one true God that guarantees this promise of redemption. This is 43:8-13. It is a courtroom scene.

The Certainty of What the Lord has Promised (43:8-13)

<p>⁸ Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes,</p> <p>⁹ All the nations have gathered together Who among them can declare this Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified,</p> <p>¹⁰ "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, So that you may know and believe Me Before Me there was no God formed,</p> <p>¹¹ "I, even I, am the LORD,</p> <p>¹² "It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, So you are My witnesses," declares the LORD,</p> <p>¹³ "Even from eternity I am He,</p>	<p>And the deaf, even though they have ears.</p> <p>So that the peoples may be assembled. And proclaim to us the former things? Or let them hear and say, "It is true."</p> <p>"And My servant whom I have chosen, And understand that I am He. And there will be none after Me. And there is no savior besides Me. And there was no strange <i>god</i> among you;</p> <p>And I am God. And there is none who can deliver out of My hand;</p> <p>I act and who can reverse it?"</p>
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God calls for the nation of Israel to be brought out in this court scene.

<p>⁸ Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes,</p>	<p>And the deaf, even though they have ears.</p>
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My first thought in bringing Israel out is that they are being brought out for judgement. Surprisingly thought, they are not brought out as the one on trial. They are brought out as the witnesses! And that's a bit shocking, because they are described to the court as blind and deaf, which are two qualities that, usually, do not commend a person as a good witness. Here is the witness for the prosecution. He can't see, and he can't hear. But he is the witness. Even so, God calls them and charges them to speak.

<p>⁹ All the nations have gathered together Who among them can declare this Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified,</p>	<p>So that the peoples may be assembled. And proclaim to us the former things? Or let them hear and say, "It is true."</p>
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Israel is to proclaim to the gathered nations "the former things." They have been practicing the Passover almost a thousand years. So, they have been celebrating the reality of redemption from Egypt. "The former things." They can give witness to that. Looking forward to future redemption, they can give witness to what God has done in the past. These blind and deaf witnesses are not called to give testimony only for the sake of the gathered nations. They need to give witness to the truth, so that they themselves will remember their God. Verse 10 begins,

<p>¹⁰ "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, So that you may know and believe Me</p>	<p>"And My servant whom I have chosen, And understand that I am He.</p>
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Connecting to the language of the blind in Isaiah, there is also the blind man in John 9. And I love how he frames his witness to the Jewish Council. He simply says what happened. They want him to

say that Jesus is a sinner. He says, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." - John 9:25. When Jesus later found the blind man, that man followed Jesus' lead into deeper truth. He ends up worshipping Jesus. John the Baptist, Andrew, Phillip, Nathaniel, the Samaritan woman, Peter the blind man, Martha and Mary, Mary Magdalene. They all communicate truth about Jesus in the Gospel of John. They say what they know. And that is part of their process of moving deeper into understanding who Jesus is. You don't give witness because you already understand. You just begin to give witness to what you do know and believe. And he uses similar language to what we described in Isaiah 43:10. Speaking to the Father, Jesus says, "Now they have come to know that everything you have given me is from you. For the words that you gave me, I have given to them, and they received them and, truly, understood that I came forth from you." They are no longer blind and deaf - or, not completely blind and deaf. They have come to truly know God; to believe; to understand. Not in full, of course. But that's part of the joy in being in relationship with God. There is always more to learn about His glory and about His goodness. And it's part of being free in our witness. You are not expected to know it all or to get it right. You don't have to answer every skeptical question. You say what you do know. You say what you do believe. And you don't have to - please, don't overstate it! Don't make it more than it is. Everything doesn't have to sound good and right. There are problems that we don't have to answer. God's got that. We just say what we know, what we believe, what we have seen, what's happened to us.

Back to Isaiah 43:9-10a,

⁹ All the nations have gathered together Who among them can declare this Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified,	So that the peoples may be assembled. And proclaim to us the former things? Or let them hear and say, "It is true."
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¹⁰ "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, So that you may know and believe Me	"And My servant whom I have chosen, And understand that I am He.
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God is calling Israel to witness. They don't even have to come up with it. He says, "Let them hear and say it is true." They can even listen to what the truth is spoken and say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's what I believe. I agree with that." God wants them to witness so that they will remember what they do know and enter more deeply into knowledge of who God is. And this is the truth they are supposed to give witness to. This is verses 10c-13. So let's practice this. He says, "Let them hear and say it is true." I'm going to read this, 10c-13, and you hear it and you says if it's true. Do you stand up and give witness to this? Is this what you believe?

Before Me there was no God formed,	And there will be none after Me.
¹¹ "I, even I, am the LORD,	And there is no savior besides Me.
¹² "It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed,	And there was no strange <i>god</i> among you;
So you are My witnesses," declares the LORD,	And I am God.
¹³ "Even from eternity I am He,	And there is none who can deliver out of My hand;
I act and who can reverse it?"	

Do you amen that? Do you believe that? Can you hear that and say, "It is true"? God is unique. There is no other God; none before Him, none after. He has declared, He has saved, and He has proclaimed that He will save again. He is from eternity God. I love the second phrase of 13a, "There is none who can deliver out of my hand." Speaking of John, that sounds like John 10:29. This is the God of Israel. This is the God Israel is called to witness to. He is absolutely unique, and He says, "There is no strange god among you!" Because there are no other gods! The gods of the nations are no gods at all. Yahweh is the only true God, and His promise of deliverance is sure.

We have considered Israel’s sin, God’s promise of salvation, God’s uniqueness in contrast to false gods – strange gods; gods that are not gods. Now, we come to the final passage, where God describes the salvation He has promised. This is 43:14-21.

Redemption from Babylon: A New Exodus (43:14-21)

<p>¹⁴ Thus says the LORD “For your sake I have sent to Babylon, Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.</p> <p>¹⁵ “I am the LORD, your Holy One, ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD, And a path through the mighty waters,</p> <p>¹⁷ Who brings forth the chariot and the horse, (They will lie down together <i>and</i> not rise again;</p> <p>¹⁸ “Do not call to mind the former things, ¹⁹ “Behold, I will do something new, I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, ²⁰ “The beasts of the field will glorify Me, Because I have given waters in the wilderness To give drink to My chosen people.</p> <p>²¹ “The people whom I formed for Myself</p>	<p>your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, And will bring them all down as fugitives, The Creator of Israel, your King.” Who makes a way through the sea The army and the mighty man They have been quenched <i>and</i> extinguished like a wick): Or ponder things of the past. Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? Rivers in the desert. The jackals and the ostriches, And rivers in the desert, Will declare My praise.</p>
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We can’t just leave it to jackals and ostriches to give glory to God, because they see what God is doing - that there should be no water here, and God has made water. It’s us. It’s His people. He said, “We don’t leave it to the stones to cry out. We declare the praise of God, because He formed us for Himself.” If we have not yet made the connection to exile in Babylon by the time that we get to this passage, the designation is now absolutely clear. The redemption promised here is redemption from Babylon.

<p>¹⁴ Thus says the LORD “For your sake I have sent to Babylon, Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.</p>	<p>your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, And will bring them all down as fugitives, The Creator of Israel, your King.” Who makes a way through the sea The army and the mighty man They have been quenched <i>and</i> extinguished like a wick): Or ponder things of the past. Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? Rivers in the desert. The jackals and the ostriches, And rivers in the desert, Will declare My praise.</p>
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This not bringing Israel down. This is bringing Babylonians down. We are now able to clear up that earlier question of how Egypt or Cush could be considered a ransom offered in the place of Israel. To save Israel, God is going to defeat the captors. They who were the invading army will now be given over to an invading army, so that Israel might be set free. This is in no way a spiritual ransom, this is not spiritual redemption.

The allusion to Egypt earlier was a metaphor for Babylon. To save Israel from Egypt, God went to war against the powers of Egypt through means of the plagues. The first-born sons of Egypt were given over to the wrath of God and the army of Egypt was swallowed up by the waters of the Red Sea. The Egyptians were given up. The whole army is dead. The firstborn are dead so that Israel might be set free. So now, projecting into the future, something similar is going to have to happen. There is this whole power structure in Babylon that is holding Israel prisoner. And the Babylonians are going to be given up. They are going to be brought down as fugitives. Their land will be overrun. Listen for that idea now in 15-17.

<p>¹⁵ “I am the LORD, your Holy One, ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD, And a path through the mighty waters,</p> <p>¹⁷ Who brings forth the chariot and the horse,</p>	<p>The Creator of Israel, your King.” Who makes a way through the sea The army and the mighty man</p>
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You know, he’s bringing them forth so that they can be crushed.

(They will lie down together *and* not rise again; They have been quenched *and* extinguished like a wick):

The image of water makes us think of the Red Sea crushing Egypt. The image of flame, that's been mostly connected with the invading army of Babylon. God made a way through the sea for Israel, but the chariot and horse of Egypt was overwhelmed. I'm considering that metaphor just applying to Babylon, "They will lie down together and not rise again." And this last verset emphasizes not the language of water, but the language of fire. "They have been quenched and extinguished like a wick." Who has been extinguished? Babylon, the future conquering army that will set fire to Israel as an agent of God's wrath, will later be snuffed out, extinguished, like two fingers quenching the wick of a lamp.

And notice the interesting language in verses 18 and 19. God called His witnesses to remember the past. He wants them to remember what He did, but He does not want us to get stuck in the past. The past is supposed to teach us, but we are not supposed to live there. The images of Egypt are not about Egypt. That's why he says in 18 and 19,

¹⁸ "Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past.
¹⁹ "Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it?
I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert.

The promises of God are for your generation and the generations that will come. We are not talking about that past deliverance of Egypt. That is a metaphor to help us think about the future. This is God's word for you. God is going to make a new way in the wilderness, not from Egypt north to Israel, but from Babylon south to Israel. And just as He provided water in the wilderness for His people back then, He is going to provide for these future exiles water in the wilderness. Verses 20-21,

²⁰ "The beasts of the field will glorify Me, The jackals and the ostriches,
Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert,
To give drink to My chosen people.
²¹ "The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.

Conclusion

God is unique. He alone is God. He will punish the sin of His people. Then he will save them from the punishment that His own justice requires. All the positive action in this sub-section is the action of God. Israel negatively sinned. That's not a positive action. Then God exerted His wrath. That's just. God promised redemption. That's merciful. God called for His people. God made a way through the desert. That's grace.

He did call His servant to witness. That is their one positive action. The Israelites are to speak of what they know. They are imperfect witnesses, mostly blind and deaf. But even in their blindness, they can give witness to what they have seen, to what they do know to be true about God, and that's a starting point. That's where they move forward in understanding who God really is. That's God's intention for the people He has called by His name. Our last verse, 43:21,

²¹ "The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.