

Isaiah 43:1-7 (NIV) ¹ But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ³ For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. ⁴ Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. ⁵ Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children 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 and my daughters from the ends of the earth-- ⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

One of the greatest people of faith in the Old Testament was a man by the name of Abraham. God spoke directly to Abraham stating to him several promises which we call the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised Abraham land. We call that the Promised Land. God promised Abraham that his name would be great. Four thousand years later we still speak about Abraham. I doubt any of us will be spoken of 4000 years from now. God promised Abraham land, fame, and that Abraham himself would be a blessing. Most important of all God promised Abraham a very special lineage, that through his family line the Messiah would come.

God looked at the entire human race and chose Abraham to be the father of the faith. The Abrahamic covenant was passed onto his son Isaac and then onto Abraham's grandson, Jacob. This family line is what we call the Hebrews from which the Messiah would be born. Jacob's name is changed to Israel. God's chosen people called the Hebrews, later on called the Jewish people, were picked by God to be His precious possession out of all the nations of the world.

Please listen to the Word of the Lord as to why God selected this particular people for Himself. 1. **Deuteronomy 7:6-9 (NIV)** ⁶ **For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.** ⁷ **The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.** ⁸ **But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he**

swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

In the New Testament the life and importance of Abraham is explained even further.

2. Romans 4:13-14, 16-17 (NLT2) ¹³ Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. ¹⁴ If God's promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless. ¹⁶ So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. ¹⁷ That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

3. The history of God calling a people unto Himself as His precious possession is our history. We all go back to Father Abraham in our history and back to Adam and Eve if the truth be told. God calls whom God calls according to God's will and God is pleased to do it.

I do not believe God is through with Israel, with the Jews. 4000 years after choosing Abraham I believe God has something special in store for them prior to the second coming of Jesus. The time will come when the blessing given to the Gentiles, to us, will return to the Jews before Jesus comes again. I honestly believe God still has a special plan for Israel. In Luke 21 Jesus speaks of the times of the Gentiles coming to an end, to a definite fulfillment. In Romans Paul writes, **4. Romans 11:25-26 (NLT2) ²⁵ I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the**

people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. ²⁶ **And so all Israel will be saved.**” We may not all agree on the interpretation of these verses but when the days are close to Jesus’ second coming, I firmly believe many of the Jews will be won over to Christ. Keep your eyes on Israel to understand the signs of the times.

The Covenant given to Abraham was passed onto Isaac and to Jacob, whom we call the Patriarchs. God spoke to Moses telling him that the Promised Land promised to Abraham would be theirs as long as they followed and obeyed God. But if they rebelled against God in specific ways, they would lose the promised land. We know that is exactly what took place.

I read this week, “Abortion was the leading cause of death worldwide in 2021 with nearly 43 million unborn babies killed in the womb according to data provided by Worldometer.” The Bible says, “God hates the hands of those who shed innocent blood.” Nothing is more innocent than an unborn baby. The good news is every aborted child goes directly to heaven for life begins at conception from a Biblical point of view. When a woman miscarries, that child goes to be the Lord directly.

I also read this week. **5. In contrast, it is the group of “nones” (atheists, agnostics or “nothing in particular”) that grows, from 16% in 2007 to 29% now. “Christians now outnumber religious ‘nones’ by a ratio of a little more than two-to-one” said the Pew Research Center. “In 2007, when the Center began asking its current question about religious identity, Christians outnumbered ‘nones’ by almost five-to-one”.**

6. When a people, when a nation turns against God, there is always a terrible price to pay. God will be patient for a time and then God lifts His restraining power and gives the people over to their sins. This is exactly what happened to God’s people in the promised land. Their rebellion reached the point of no return, and the Promised Land was lost. 722 and 586 B.C. we see the judgment of God and yes, the judgment was severe. Reading the news in our

land one sees things deteriorating from coast to coast. The only answer is for the people in our land to repent, to turn to God so renewal and revival can come, and our land be healed. There is no other way out of this downward spiral. No matter how many laws are made in Washington D.C. they cannot solve the problem of sinful hearts hardened toward God. Only God can change a person's heart. Only God can change the course of a nation.

God had his chosen people of Judah and Jerusalem exiled into Babylon. The people of God were exactly where they did not want to be. They had been taken captive out of Judah into Babylon finding themselves prisoners of war, POW's. They were living in enemy territory against their wills. God's people had refused to obey God and live by His Word. The Bible tells us you cannot ignore God and get away with it. You reap what you sow.

7. Friends, our rebellious lives are never too far away for God to bring us back. No matter how far into sin we fall, no matter the depths of our rebellion against God, God is always true to His word and true to His people. God can come after you in the deepest of pits, pull you up and redeem your errors, turning them into teachable moments as your heart, your life is brought back to God. The severity of God's judgments is not God's final word. God's final word is grace and God's grace restores you. **8. The depth of your sin is met with even greater grace to be brought back close to God.** Your time away from God will be used of God to bring you closer to God. God's people were in Babylon but no matter where you find yourself, whatever is holding you captive, God's grace will come and bring you home to Him. He is just waiting for your heart to be softened toward God. Sometimes it takes great suffering for this to occur. You find yourself in utter darkness and you begin to yearn for the light. The sin you fell into becomes a door to death and you want new life. God is bringing you back.

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rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” Friends, the judgment of God is spent on you and me to turn us around so we return to the Lord our God, the one who created us. God tells us not to fear, to fear not because God has redeemed you, called you, summoned you and you belong to God. You are a people of God’s own possession.

Friend, there is no sin so great that God will not forgive. God’s grace is greater than our sin. God’s grace delivers us from the judgment that God brought into our lives to bring about our repentance. God will even redeem the wasted time and use it for the greater glory of God. Relationships will be healed, souls will be delivered from sin and God’s rule in your life will reign once more. You will not drown in your sin, nor will the fires of your sin consume you. God is your Rescuer; your Savior, and God knows exactly what He is doing in your life.

In our Isaiah passage God promised to bring his people back into the Promised Land and of course God did just that. **9. God has the promised land in front of us that we look so forward too. A brand-new earth and a brand-new heaven.** **10. Following God now, no matter what the cost, God will richly reward.** A strong warning from God. **Genesis 4:7 (NLT2)** ⁷ You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.” Let us pray to that end.