

Commentary on Isaiah 41:8-10, 17-20
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **December 12, 2010**, is from **Isaiah 41:8-10, 17-20**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary*. The **[International Bible Lessons](http://internationalbiblelessons.com/)** can be read at: <http://internationalbiblelessons.com/>; new *International Bible Lessons* are also published each Saturday in [The Oklahoman](#) newspaper.

Isaiah 41:8-10

8 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

God respected the fact that the children of Abraham, especially Jacob (whose name God changed to Israel) and his children, were the children of His friend. God did much for them simply because Abraham was His friend, and because God planned for the Messiah to be born as a descendant of Jacob. How wonderful to think that Jesus, the Messiah, called His faithful followers friends. How wonderful to think that God wants to be our friend and sent Jesus to us in order to establish a lasting friendship with us.

9 you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to

you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off”;

God led His people, Israel, out of Egypt into the Promised Land. As punishment for their sins, He also drove them from the Promised Land into exile (first, in 722 BC, Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom; and second, in 605 BC and 586 BC, God drove the Southern Kingdom into exile in Babylon). These nations were the “farthest corners” in the experience of Israel. However, through Isaiah, God wanted to comfort them with the knowledge that He had not cast them off; for their suffering was deserved discipline that He would end in the future.

10 do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

The promise of God in this verse is appropriate for all of God’s people to understand and apply to their lives, for God will not change His character or His nature. When suffering, neither the Israelites nor any friends of God need to be afraid. God is with us! “Emmanuel,” the name given to Jesus means “God with us.” If we have enemies trying to destroy our faith or our lives, God will uphold us and His right hand is always victorious. God will help us and hold us up so we will stand in faith in the presence of our enemies, whether spiritual or human.

Isaiah 41:17-20

17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

God's people are not exempt from being poor and needy, even in need of a life necessity, such as water. God's people will sometimes suffer for their lack of necessities, and no matter where they look do not find a source of supply. Still, God is our help and He will answer us. He will assure us of His presence, even though we may lack what we need materially. His presence will meet our ultimate needs and give us encouragement even if we must suffer in this present time.

18 I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

Ultimately, God will meet our needs and the needs of all the earth. Jesus promised He would come a second time and make all things right. In this life, God will bring times of spiritual refreshing to His people. Jesus said He would give water to His followers that would become "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). Without water, we cannot live. Without

the spiritual water from God, we cannot live spiritually.

19 I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together,

We can think of the desert as a place where plants suited to dry places can grow and bloom, and only these types of plants, such as the cactus, can thrive there. Someday, God will bring water to desert places so the types of trees mentioned in this verse, trees needing lots of water, will grow and flourish and beautify the land. God will do the same for us spiritually no matter what our past when we turn to Jesus the Messiah as our Lord and Savior. Many arid places have been reclaimed by reforestation, and God wants to reclaim the lives of those who have become spiritually dry. Believers can teach the scriptures and God's promises to help others reclaim what they have lost.

20 so that all may see and know, all may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.

What God will do (and what God has already done) in our lives, others will see, and they will come to understand that the Lord has done these things and

not we ourselves. God does the impossible for and through His people. The children of God, those especially spiritually attuned to listening to the true God and seeing how God works, will be inclined to seeing God at work all around them and in His family. They will be the ones to praise Him for his marvelous work and lead others to praise God too.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think about being a friend of God and Jesus the Messiah? How does that make you feel personally? How might you become a better friend to them?
2. Have you ever felt as though God had cast you off? What helped you deal with that feeling? How might you use these verses from Isaiah to encourage someone who feels cast off by God? How can the Lord's discipline make us feel as though we are cast off? What are your thoughts about discipline and Revelation 3:19?
3. When God is present with us, describe the kind of Person who is with us. How does knowing the kind of Person God is make you feel, especially in times of trouble? In times of lacking material necessities, how can God's presence make a difference?
4. If someone feels spiritually dry, what can they do to become satisfied?

5. Read these verses once again. What one verse seems to be the most encouraging verse to you? Give a reason for your answer. Pray for someone you know who may need spiritual refreshment. What might you do to help them?

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