

**Intro:**

We spent two sessions analyzing faith/trust.

Parts	Latin	Synonyms	Personality
Knowledge	Notitia	Understanding	Mind
Assent	Assensus	Agreement	Will
Trust	Fiducia	Reliance	Emotion

Last week, we began to see how God demonstrates his trustworthiness to us. This encourages our trust in all that God has said. This is part of the purpose of narrative passages — God demonstrates his trustworthiness to people of the past, and expects us to trust the rest of what he says.

**I. What do we know about God?**

We only know what God reveals, either through discerning about him through what he made (creation), or hearing and understanding him through direct, special revelation (Scriptures).

**II. God's active demonstration of trustworthiness**

- A. Declaring, then doing
- B. Covenanting, then keeping
- C. Defending, then demonstrating (Num 11)
- D. Human testimony to trustworthiness

**III. Prophetic testimony to God's integrity**

## A. Isaiah

"Isaiah 40-48 is arguably God's most magisterial<sup>1</sup> self-revelation in all of Scripture. Dominating this self-revelation of theology proper [the doctrine of God] is His declaration not merely that there is no other God like Him, but that there is no other God, period."<sup>2</sup>

1. The promises of God to Israel
  - a. Comfort of coming complete redemption (40.1-2)

Not yet fully satisfied

<sup>1</sup> Magisterial: majestic, stately, august

<sup>2</sup> Layton Talbert, *The Trustworthiness of God's Words: Why the Reliability of Every Word from God Matters* (Geanies House, UK: Christian Focus, 2022), 43 (All other quotations will be noted merely by a page number [in brackets]).

## b. Entering the courtroom

- 1) The coastlands called to court (41.1)
- 2) The coastlands warned of judgement (41.2-4)
- 3) The coastlands' response
  - a) Fear (41.5-6)
  - b) Faith... in idols ... that must be nailed down (41.7)

## c. The appeal to Israel (41.8-20)

- 1) Declaration of loyalty: I have chosen you (8-10)
- 2) Promises of victory
  - a) Your enemies will be shamed and disgraced (11-13)
  - b) You will be the instrument of their destruction (14-16)
  - c) Your privations will turn to plenty (17-19)
- 3) The call to consider (20)
  - a) See, recognize, consider, gain insight
  - b) That the Lord has done this

The choice of Israel has nothing to do with Israel's merits, the victory of Israel has nothing to do with Israel's strength, the fulfillment of God's promises has everything to do with vindicating God and God's words.

## 2. The proof of God's promises: saying, then doing

- a. God returns to the courtroom and challenges the coastlands to present a case based on the voice of their idols (41.21-23)

"Prophecy is the ultimate criterion of deity. At the core of prophecy is a threefold cord: knowledge of the future (divine omniscience), combined with control over the future (divine omnipotence), expressed in an accurate communication of the future (divine veracity, integrity)." [45]

- b. God presents his prediction in figurative language (41.25-26)
  - 1) See also v. 2 "one from the east"

2) Verse 25 “one from the north”

- c. God goes beyond the exile and return with another prophecy: My Servant (42.1-4)

So far, the challenge is to the idols, to put up or shut up. But God hasn't given anything to prove his own case. So far...

- d. God turns to specifics

1) Babylon will be destroyed (44.14)

2) Jerusalem will be inhabited because Cyrus will command it (44.24-28)

3) Cyrus will come to power by God's hand ... for the sake of Jacob (45.1-4)

### 3. Cyrus, King of Persia

- a. Timing: Isaiah's words come eighty years before the Babylonian captivity, one hundred fifty years before Cyrus
- b. God calls him by name
- c. Cyrus comes to the throne of the Medes and Persians
- d. Cyrus destroys Babylon
- e. Cyrus decrees the captive peoples should return to their lands and rebuild their cities

I noted that the comfort passage isn't yet complete: Jerusalem's warfare has not ended.

Given the specifics of the Cyrus prophecy, who can doubt that the day of peace will ultimately come?

## B. Jeremiah

1. Jeremiah's prophecy opens with God declaring his jealousy for his word

Jer 1.11-12 ¶ The word of the LORD came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “I see a rod of an almond [*shāqēd*] tree.”<sup>12</sup> Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over [*shōqēd*] My word to perform it.”

## 2. God declares his opposition to false prophets in Jer 23

See 23.16-17, 18-22

- a. I am against the prophets ... who steal My words (30)
- b. I am against the prophets ... who use their tongues and declare, 'The Lord says' (31)
- c. I am against those who have prophesied false dreams (32)
- d. God's indictment of false prophets: you have perverted the words of the living God (36)

## 3. God confronts those who fled Jerusalem for Egypt in Jer 44

- a. They are banished from the land for their idolatry (20-25)
- b. They who sought safety in Egypt were to perish (27)
- c. The few who escape "so that you may know that My words will surely stand" (29)

## C. Ezekiel

### 1. God intends to make the nations "know that I am the LORD"

- a. The phrase (or variations) over 70 times in Ezekiel
- b. Four times in chapter 6: 6.7, 10, 13, 14

### 2. Many of these references have to do with the Babylonian conquest: they are long fulfilled

These judgements are "incontestable testimony" to the integrity of God's word. [49]

### 3. God's purpose for the prophet was to vindicate his word through the prophet

Ezek 2.4-5 "I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'<sup>5</sup> "As for them, whether they listen or not— for they are a rebellious house— they will know that a prophet has been among them.

Ezek 33.33 "So when it comes to pass— as surely it will— then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst."

#### 4. Summary of this divine emphasis in Ezekiel

- a. The fulfillments of judgement on Israel will make Israel will know that "I am the Lord" (12.25)
- b. The fulfillments of judgement on surrounding kingdoms will make those kingdoms know that "I am the Lord"
- c. The fulfillment of undeserved but promised blessing and restoration for Israel
  - 1) Will make Israel know "that I am the Lord" (37.14)
  - 2) Will make the *nations* know "that I am the Lord" (17.24) ["trees" = "nations"]

"Prophecy verifies not merely God's omnipotence and omniscience, but the integrity and reliability of every word that proceeds from His mouth." [52]

#### D. Zechariah

1. In calling Zechariah to the prophetic ministry (70 yrs after Ezekiel) he reminds the people of the reliability of his word (Zech 1.2-6)
  - a. Your fathers did not listen to my words (4)
  - b. My words overtook them (6)
2. Zechariah challenges a new generation to believe God's words of restoration (Zech 8)
  - a. Prophecy of restoration — God says, "Is it too difficult in my sight?" (6)
  - b. The situation is post-exile, the temple is incomplete, the city walls are ruined, the neighbours are hostile, the people are struggling
  - c. The challenge of faith: Live according to God's words (14-17)

#### Conclusion:

"God is beyond the access, experience, and invention of man. How can we know Him? Only if He reveals Himself to us. That means that for us to have a true and accurate understanding of God, that self-revelation must be trustworthy. That's why God goes to such lengths to insist and demonstrate that what He says is exactly what He is and what He does." [55]