

Who Knows and Controls the Future

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[0:00] Isaiah chapter 41. Isaiah chapter 41. We'll read the whole chapter. Be silent before me, you islands. Let the nations renew their strength. Let them come forward and speak. Let us meet together at the place of judgment.

Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service? He hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him.

He turns them to dust with his sword, to windblown chaff with his bow. He pursues them and moves on unscathed by a path his feet have not traveled before.

Who has done this and carried it through, calling for the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, with the first of them and with the last, I am he. The islands have seen it and fear. The ends of the earth tremble.

They approach and come forward. Each helps the other and says to his brother, be strong. The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, and he who smooths with the hammer spurs on him who strikes the anvil.

[1:16] He says of the welding, it is good. He nails down the idol so it will not topple. But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham, my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you.

I said, you are my servant. I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced.

Those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all.

For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear. I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm, Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you, declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

[2:32] See, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush them and reduce the hills to chaff.

You will winnow them, the wind will pick them up, and a gale will blow them away. But you will rejoice in the Lord and glory in the Holy One of Israel.

The poor and needy search for water, but there is none. Their tongues are parched with thirst. But I, the Lord, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

I will make rivers flow on barren heights and springs within the valleys. I will turn the deserts into pools of water and the parched ground into springs.

I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia and the myrtle and the olive. I will set pines in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

[3:42] Present your case, says the Lord. Set forth your arguments, says Jacob's king. Bring in your idols to tell us what's going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome, or declare to us the things to come.

Tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear.

But you are less than nothing, and your works are utterly worthless. He who chooses you is detestable. I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes, one from the rising sun, who calls on my name.

He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay. Who told of this from the beginning, so we could know, or beforehand, so we could say, he was right?

No one told of this. No one foretold it. No one heard any words from you. I was the first to tell Zion, look, here they are.

[4:57] I gave to Jerusalem a messenger of good tidings. I look, but there is no one, no one among them to give counsel, no one to give answer when I ask them.

See, they are all false. Their deeds amount to nothing. Their images are but wind and confusion. I have a few questions for you to start with.

What did you have for breakfast today? You can answer that, I trust, in your mind. Here's the next one. What will you have for breakfast 20 years from now?

And while you're at it, tell me what the temperature will be at dawn. Or who will the leading nation of the world be 200 years from now?

And while you're at it, tell me the leader's name of that nation. You say, nobody can answer those kinds of questions, John, because only God knows the future.

[6:07] And of course, you would be right. But if God should speak and tell men what's going to happen in the future, then men as well would know the future, right?

Now, we need to call a time out in the book of Isaiah this morning, as we're working through this book, to tell you about a problem that Bible scholars have. At least those scholars who think that the Bible is simply the record of man's thoughts about God.

And man's thoughts about history. There's this problem. They come to the first half of Isaiah, and they meet a man named Isaiah who lived in the last half of the 8th century B.C.

And he writes all sorts of things to his own countrymen, his contemporaries, about things happening in their lifetime. The rise of Assyria and so forth. But then, the last half of the book talks about Babylon being the great world empire and taking little Judah into captivity.

Well, that would not happen for another hundred years after Isaiah died. We've got a problem here. There's solution. There's obviously two authors to Isaiah.

[7:26] There's one who lived in the 8th century B.C. and spoke to his countrymen. And there must have been another Isaiah or another author of Isaiah who lived a hundred years later and saw Israel go away into captivity in Babylon.

But their problem is still not solved. Because Isaiah also speaks about after the 70 years in captivity, God would raise up a ruler from the east and he would conquer Babylon and he would set free the Israelites and let them return to their homeland where they would rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

And he even gives his name. The ruler's name is Cyrus. Now, Isaiah in the 8th century could never have known that.

And the second author, a hundred years later, could never know that. There must have been a third Isaiah. So now we've got three authors of Isaiah. And yet the problem is still not fixed because you well know that Isaiah also speaks in his letter about things that would happen 700 years in the future.

About a virgin who would conceive and give birth to a son who would rule over all the nations.

About a servant of the Lord who would be despised and rejected by men and be cursed by God as he bore men's sins and won salvation for them.

[9:02] About a man, this man who would be numbered with transgressors and would be with the rich and the wicked in his death and that God would raise again.

You see, all of those things were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. And yet no one would say that Isaiah was written after Jesus of Nazareth had lived and done all of that.

Of course not. That prophecy had been written down and Jesus even had it. While he lived, he quoted often from it. All these problems about the authorship of Isaiah are dissolved if you simply receive the Bible as it presents itself.

What does the Bible claim to be? God's word to man. Not man's words about God.

God's word to man. It's a supernatural book is what it claims. It claims that men did not speak these words by the things found in their own minds, but that God spoke to men and God directed their thoughts so that what the Bible says, God says.

[10:11] Now, if that's true, I have no problem with a book of Isaiah talking about things that were being done in his day, things that would be done a hundred years after, a hundred and seventy

years after, seven hundred.

Do you know there are things in Isaiah that still haven't happened? He talks about a new heaven and a new earth. That will really make them scratch their head. Who wrote that prophecy? Well, no one has lived out there except God, who knows the end from the beginning, who lives outside of time and has spoken to his prophets and revealed what it is that he is going to do in the future.

There are children here who are wiser than men with PhDs who spend their whole lifetime studying the Bible. And they profess themselves to be wise.

And they are fools because they do not believe that this book is from God, but rather just the mere product of men. Well, that's the time out with regard to prophecy and words about the future here in this book of Isaiah.

Now, chapter 41 opens with God calling the nations and laying before them a challenge, a showdown. You remember the showdown at Mount Carmel, don't you?

[11:34] It happened over 100 years before Isaiah. The showdown between the Lord's prophets, the Lord's prophet Elijah, and the 450 prophets of Baal.

And all Israel is present to watch and Elijah said to the people of Israel, how long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him.

But if Baal is God, follow him. But quit your two-timing ways. Quit living with one foot in the world and one in the church.

If God is God, then get on with serving him. If he's not God, if Baal's God, then quit pretending to worship God and throw your lot in with Baal. You see the kind of decision and challenge that Elijah was putting before the people.

What was the proof of who the real God is? Elijah says to the prophets of Baal, you call on your God and I'll call on my God.

[12:40] And the one who answers by fire, he is God. Well, you remember the outcome. Fire fell when Elijah prayed.

It did not fall when the prophets of Baal prayed. Now here in Isaiah 41, I say we have another challenge like that. This time the challenge is being made to all the nations.

Come on forward. Bring your idols with you that we might see who is really God. And this time the deciding issue is not who answers by fire, but rather who knows and controls the future of human history.

Who knows it and controls the future? The one who can infallibly predict and control the future, he is God.

That's the challenge before us in chapter 41 of Isaiah. Notice the question is who? That's the question. Now who is it? Is it Jehovah God or is it some other God and his idols?

[13:48] Who, verse 2, has stirred up one from the east calling him in righteousness to his service? Now this mighty conqueror from the east will later be called by name in Isaiah's prophecy.

His name was Cyrus. He was a Persian. And what Isaiah is saying is that he did not rise to power on his own.

He's not succeeded and conquered these many nations on his own. Somebody stirred him up. Somebody called him to this work.

This righteous work. And this somebody hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him. This somebody turns nations to dust with his, Cyrus' sword.

And he turns nations to windblown chaff with Cyrus' bow. The Persians were famous archers. But they didn't conquer with their bow and arrow.

[14:50] Somebody else was turning the nations to chaff before their bow and giving success. who is this somebody who calls Cyrus into action and gives him such victories over the nations?

Verse 4 renews the question. Who is it? Who has done this? And carried it through calling forth the generation from the beginning with the first of them and with the last.

Notice it's a work he speaks of as already having been done. And oh, the scholars scratch their head. You mean that somebody's writing about Cyrus after he's already conquered?

He must have lived way much later than Isaiah. No, Isaiah's writing, but he's speaking of it as a day when the work has already been done. Who has done this?

Who has carried it through? Not only the planning and initiating it, but carrying it through to the end.

[15:51] It's a work that this somebody starts and that he himself finishes. It's not just Cyrus. It's doing this.

There is somebody behind him. Who is it? And the answer comes in verse 4. I, the Lord, I am he. Always me.

The unchanging I am. So do you see what God is claiming in this challenge? He's claiming to be the one who controls everything done on the stage of human history. Not an actor, not a king, not a soldier, not an archer, rises on the stage of human history that God does not put on the stage. Stir up, create, bring to pass. And he has righteous work for Cyrus the Persian to do for him. And he determined the work that he would do.

He planned every detail of his campaign, which nations he would conquer, including the mighty Babylonian Empire that no one could defeat and that Cyrus would then set God's people free to go home and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

[17:05] I'm the one who planned it, God says. I stirred him up. I called him to it. I empowered him. I gave him victories from start to finish, all for the glory of my name and the good of my people.

And that's not just something God did uniquely in 600 years B.C. He's doing that in every generation. That's the way God is.

You see, if this doesn't fit with your view of God, you need a new view of God. This is the God of the Bible. Behold your God, Isaiah is saying. He's the one who is in control of all human history.

He's not a passive spectator looking down on his world and seeing what is going on down there and taken with surprise. No, he's actively ruling over it all, working everything out according to the plan of him who works everything according to the purpose of his will.

And he does it all in perfect righteousness. So this is the way God is comforting his people.

Remember how he started verse 40? Comfort, comfort my people.

[18:17] And what's the comfort? It is living in the midst of the raging of the nations. Living in the midst of droughts and depressions and disasters and diseases and seemingly senseless murders and massacres and confusing events in our life and in our world.

Here's a pillow for the worst headache. Our God reigns. He reigns over it all. This is the shortest bridge as someone has said.

From despair to hope, our God reigns. He knows, He controls all that is happening in history.

Here's the comfort in all of our troubles, in all of our sufferings. He controls all things at all times, in all places.

And He works it for the good of His people. Now, if you embrace the Scripture's view of God found here, then you'll watch the news with different eyes.

[19:26] And if you embrace the view of Scripture, who God is from Scripture, you'll think of your own trials differently. You'll know that behind it all is God working out His sovereign will, doing exactly what He planned in the national scene and in your life.

That's the only God the Bible knows. History is His story. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

To Him alone be the glory. Now, what God was doing in history was just downright bone-chilling.

Cyrus was going to smash peoples and nations and armies and rulers.

And in verses 5 to 7, we see the response of the nations to what God is doing. What did the nations do? Well, they did what any sane people would do. They trembled with fear. Oh, but then, instead of trusting in the living God, they turned to their idols for help and for security and safety in the time of disaster.

disaster. If you think an idol is only a figurine that's set up on the mantle of your living room, you will not gain what Isaiah and what God has for you in Isaiah 41.

[21:02] Isaiah, idols are God's substitutes. Idols are things that we put in the place that God should have. So, in disaster, where should we draw comfort and support and safety and security and refuge from God?

The nations drew comfort and security from their idols. Say, where do you run when you face troubles?

Who do you trust in for refuge? Doctors? Yourself? Others? Some charm? Or the living God?

Well, the nations turned in their fear to their idols. Now, it's a sad picture we have for us here in 5 through 7.

You see, without a mighty fortress to take refuge in, they're left with these worthless idols to trust in, to deal with the disaster that's on the international scene.

[22:08] So, here they are, these idolaters, and they're encouraging each other. They're encouraging each other to lean on their idols and encouraging each other that their idols will hold them up. Be strong, brother.

That's a good weld there, brother. That'll surely hold up as they nail down the idols so it will not topple. Do you see how Isaiah is making fun of them? How he's trying to embarrass idolaters for what they're doing?

How in the world can your idol hold you up in trouble if you've got to nail it down so it won't topple in trouble? He's trying to drive them off of finding security in their idols and turning to the one who alone can help us.

Is that not the picture of the world? Dial up some talk shows. Someday. And listen to the world encouraging one another to trust in their idols.

The things that give you significance. The things that give you comfort. The things that give you strength and safety. Be strong, brother.

[23:19] Be strong, sister. Look within. Look to the higher power. Do this. Do that. Do the other thing. Whatever the latest worldly wisdom would suggest.

It's people trying to deal with their troubles and disasters without having a refuge in God. It's a sad, sad picture.

And he's out And notice he's doing it in front of Israel.

He's speaking all this not just to the nations, but he's doing it in front of Israel because the Israelites themselves had forsaken the living God to turn to what? To idols, the idols of the nations.

That's why God raised up Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to take them away for 70 years into exile. Why? Because they brought idols and put them in the place of God in their lives.

[24:21] And here they are in trouble. And what are they trusting in? They're trusting in idols just like the nations. And so God is out to shame the idols that Israel herself might learn.

And who is the only one worthy of trust in times of disaster? Who is really God? The idols that need shoring up so they will not topple or the Lord who controls the future.

Well, next comes God's word to his own people. As they too were living in this world where Cyrus was on the march. What's their response to be?

Verses 8 and following. But you. And we see a contrast. Not like the nations who are fearing and turning to idols. But you is how he starts this whole section at verse 8.

But you, O Israel, my servant. Jacob, whom I have chosen. You descendants of Abraham, my friend. I took you from the ends of the earth, from the farthest corners. I called you.

[25:26] I said, you are my servant. I have chosen you and have not rejected you. Notice he calls Israel my servant. Do you know what God called Israel as his servant to do?

They were to declare God's glory to the nations. They were to so live and speak in front of the nations that the nations would learn what a mighty and wonderful God they served.

That was their calling. That's why God chose them and called them and made them his people. He says, you're my servant. To declare my glory to the nations.

What a high calling. And they failed miserably in their calling. They dishonored him.

Because instead of in trouble putting their hopes in God. They turned their back on God. And they trusted in idols. The idols of the nations.

[26:31] As if we can find more help in the idols of the nations than we can in our God, Jehovah. Do you see how they dishonored God? They failed completely in their calling to glorify God in front of the nations.

But here is God saying to captive failure Israel. I'm not done with you. I'm not through with you. My servant.

You're still my servant to declare my glory to the nations. I've chosen you. I've not rejected you. I'm still going to get the job done through you.

Yes, I'm purging you down there in Babylon. And I'm doing it so that you might be able to fulfill your high calling to the nations. And when I have purged you, I will deliver you from Babylon and I will use you.

And you will bring glory to me even in the way that I deliver you from Babylon. In other words, God is not abandoning his plan A for his servant Israel and saying, well, I guess since you guys worshipped idols and defiled me in front of the nations, I guess I've got to settle for plan B for you.

[27:44] Oh, no, I'm not done with you. You're still going to bring me glory before the nations. You say, yeah, but what about idolatry? I can cure that, too.

I can cleanse your heart from idols. I can put in your heart a desire to worship me alone and to live unto me. And when I do that and cleanse you from your sins, you will do what Isaiah did.

You will come and say, Lord, send me. Send me to declare your glory to the nations. Oh, yes, God has not given up on them.

He's still going to bring glory to his name. And child of God, you may have failed miserably in your high calling to which and for which God chose you to display his glory to this world, to show something of his holiness, of his love, his grace.

His righteousness. And you may find yourself having resorted to various idols in your life to make you happy, to give you security, to give you comfort, to bring you meaning in life.

[28:49] And in serving your idols, you've dishonored and disobeyed the Lord miserably. And you may be full of regrets for the way you've lived. But hear the word of God to his people.

Comfort them. Comfort them, God says to his prophets. And go tell them, you are still my servant. My eye is still upon you, even as you're pining away in Babylonian captivity under my heavy hand of discipline.

I'm going to cleanse you. I've chosen you. You're mine. I'm going to correct you. And I'm going to bring you to fulfill my purposes. I will heal your waywardness and love you freely.

And when I've cleansed you, I will use you again to declare my glory. You're not on the shelf for the rest of your life. Oh, yes, in the furnace, God may prove you, thence to bring you forth more bright, but can never cease to love you.

Thou art precious in his sight. And so God's comforting word to Israel lying under the heel of the warring nations is, do not fear.

[29:58] Do not be dismayed. Oh, the nations are fearing. But oh, Israel, my servant, do not fear. There's no command in the Bible repeated more often than this one.

Do not fear. And you know, God never says it. If there's not reason to obey it.

And God gives the reasons here. If God says, do not fear, there is every good reason not to fear, to not be afraid. And what are those reasons? For I am with you. I am your God.

I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Do you see the privileges that belong to God's chosen people?

They can face the same events, the very same disasters, the same Cyrus on the move, the same diseases, the same problems as the world faces with fear and not be afraid.

[31:05] Why? Because of who God is. Their God. In control of all human history. Because what he has made them.

His servants. His loved ones. His chosen ones. And because of what he promises to do for them. I will, I will, I will. Strengthen, help, uphold you.

Rescue you. See how he delights in his servants? Anybody who touches them touches the apple of my eye, he says. And so all who oppose them will be as nothing and will perish before the Lord.

They will become less than nothing, he says in verses 11 through 13. Now, where is Israel's confidence then? Why is it that they're not to fear? It's not because of anything found in and of themselves.

What are they in and of themselves? What does verse 14 say? Who are you, Israel? Well, you're a worm, Jacob. You're just a little insignificant nation, Israel.

[32:12] Kids, what's weaker than a little worm? And that's all. They were just a little worm. And yet God says to the little worm in front of mighty Persian emperor, don't be afraid.

That's right. Because your confidence doesn't rest on how big and strong you are. But on how big and strong your God is. And what he's promised to do for you. So Israel need not fear like the nations who have only propped up idols to help them.

They have the living God with them. And verses 15 and 16 says that God will take this little worm and he will transform them into a mighty threshing machine.

That's a sled with studs, sharp studs that they drag across the grain to separate the wheat from the chaff. And then they would winnow it with throwing it in the air and the wind would blow the chaff away and the heavy grain would fall.

And God says, I'm going to take you, little worm, Jacob. And I'm going to turn you into such a threshing machine that you're going to thresh the mountains and the hills.

[33:22] And every obstacle that stands in the way of my plan for you and your joy in me. I'm going to cause you to pull your threshing sled over the mountains and hills and the wind will blow them away as chaff.

Doesn't matter how little you are, how insignificant it matters. What God has promised to do through you. Every obstacle to your joy removed.

And what's the result? You will rejoice in the Lord and glory in the Holy One of Israel because you will know it's him. He's the one who has brought deliverance. What will God not do for his chosen ones that he loves?

We go to Calvary for the highest expression of what he will not do. He will give such a high price as his own son delivered up to be damned for us.

Such is a demonstration of what God will do for his chosen ones. He will give his own son to redeem us and to secure our eternal joy in the Lord and our glory in God our Savior.

[34:36] So the frightening events of life threaten us with loss. They expose our personal weakness. How little we are. We see that when we come up against big problems.

We feel so inadequate in ourselves. We're as inadequate as worms. We don't have it within us to cope. We're poor and needy. And yet it is to such poor and needy worms, verse 17, that God promises to provide all we need.

And now the picture moves from a threshing machine to a journey through a howling, thirsty desert. And he paints a graphic picture that was reminiscent of their 40 years journey through the desert. It's a dry, it's a thirsty land. We've known something of heat and dryness and thirst. And we've seen how things die without water. That's true of us as well. And that's the picture here.

There's dry and thirst. Parched lips. No water. That's frightening. To be in a desert without water. That's how weak we are.

[35:42] We're just worms waiting to shrivel in the heat of the desert. How like this is our journey to heaven through the wilderness of this world.

Finding ourselves continually in circumstances where we don't have what it takes. We need water. There isn't any. Everything that we need we don't have.

And we're left empty. We're left thirsty. Unable to make it. Yet, here's the promise. When we cry to him in our need with parched lips, he says, I, the Lord, will answer them.

I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will make rivers flow on barren heights, springs within the valleys. I will turn the deserts into pools of water and the parts ground into springs and all cause trees to grow for their shade.

Do you see how God promises to provide everything for his troubled people? He transforms our desert-like lives into well-watered gardens that bring forth fruit unto him.

[36:47] And notice why he does it. Why does God do all of this? Verse 20. So that people may see and know, may consider and understand that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

He saves us in a way that makes it clear that it's his work and not ours. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. If a worm survives, a worm in a desert survives, it's not because of it wiggling around.

No. Somebody got it water. And if you are a saved person today, it's not because of any wiggling of your will or anything else.

God sent his Savior and rescued you or you would perish forever. He saves in a way that shows it is him so that everyone who sees and hears and considers and even thinks for a moment about it and really understands what's happened here will know it's the Lord.

God. So we get mercy in a way that God gets all the glory. When water.

[38:06] How did God provide water in the wilderness for his people? It was sometimes through a rock that was smitten. When water comes from a smitten rock in a desert, there's no room for man to boast.

No, you were just rescued, man. God did it. And when salvation flows from a smitten Savior on Calvary, there's no room for man to boast.

You only survive God's wrath because another one was smitten in your place. And in each new trial, it's the same thing. God dispenses mercy and help in a way that gets all the glory for himself so that when we come through each new trial, then we see and know and consider and understand more deeply just how good and great our God is.

We learn afresh how much he does for us. And as we are rejoicing in him and in his sufficiency, God is glorified. Now, we tend to think that God is only glorified when we're strong and capable people.

When we can come up to a day, there's a task and we just plow through it. God's my strength. Then we think God's glorified that way. Well, he may be.

[39:25] But haven't you found that God seems bent on glory and find himself in trials that expose our weakness and inadequacy? Haven't you found that God most glorifies himself when we're reduced to that little worm like existence where all is dry and there is no water?

So that when he does save us. We will glory in him. Because it's then when we are weak and empty and have nothing to bring to the pressures that are put upon us.

It's then that we enjoy his presence most. It's then that we count him most valuable to have God with us. It's then that we treasure his promises, that we seek his help.

Confident that there is more of him to know and live upon. It's then that he communicates himself and his grace to us in abounding measures. And as he does, we get the help.

And the watching world gets a powerful witness of how adequate our God is. And God gets all the glory.

[40:46] We get help. The world gets a powerful witness about the glory of our God. And God gets the glory, the praise. So let your worries and your fears and the pressures of life be calls to throw yourself upon this adequate God to prove his sufficiency.

That's what glorifies him the most. So what are propped up idols compared to this God who's for us? You know, when we turn to idols, it's when we expect a little help from God.

So every day we need to taste his goodness all over again. Every day I need to be convinced how good my God is, how true his promises, what I can expect of him.

Lest I start to take up the mantra of the idol. Turn to me. Come here. I'll be your joy, your peace.

Well, Isaiah is showing how stupid it is to trust in worthless idols.

When instead we have our wonderful God. And so at the end of this chapter, he renews the challenge. Remember the challenge? Who knows and controls the future of human history?

[41:59] The one who can infallibly predict and control the future. He is God. So he calls on the nations. Come on now. Present your case. He says in verse 22. Bring in your idols. Isn't it something they have to be brought in?

So weak they are. They've got to be carried in. Bring in your idols and tell us what's going to happen. Tell us the things that were so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare us the things to come.

Tell us what the future holds so that we may know that you are gods. Do you see that? Tell us the future so we can know your gods.

Do something. Don't just sit there looking stupid. Do something, Isaiah is saying. Something good, something bad, something to terrify us, something to make us say, wow, this is God.

And what do they do? The idols do nothing. And their very silence condemns them as do nothings. Tell us the future so that we may know that you are gods.

[43:03] Well, they do nothing. They cannot tell us the future and bring it to pass. Verse 29 and see, they're all false. They're all false. They're all a cheat.

They're a lie. They're just pretend gods. Not the real God. Their deeds amount to nothing. And their images are but wind and confusion. Confusion. Just empty windbags.

The nations are involved in false religion. And anyone who follows them is like them. Detestable.

We become like what we worship. But in contrast to the idols who don't know the future, Isaiah and God himself speaking through Isaiah says, I both know the future and I control the future.

This is God speaking. He predicts it and he brings it to pass. Verse 25. I, on the other hand, these silent idols, they can't tell you the future. But I, verse 25, I have stirred up one from the north and he comes.

[44:06] When I call, he comes. One from the rising sun who calls on my name. He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if they were potter treading the clay. You see what the Lord is claiming?

He's the one that raised up Cyrus from the east to destroy the nations with such ease. But he not only did it. He foretold it. He predicted it over 140 years in advance through his prophet Isaiah.

That's something only God can do. Verse 26. Who told of this from the beginning so we could know or beforehand so we could say, you know, he was right.

No one told of this. No one foretold it. No one heard any words from you. Not a peep out of your idols. I was the first to tell Zion, look, there they are.

I gave to Jerusalem a messenger of good tidings to tell them, wait, wait, I'm going to bring a man up who will set you free from your bondage and captivity in Babylon. I sent this messenger of good hope long before.

[45 : 11] And his sudden rise on the stage of history, the rise of Cyrus, no one saw it coming. No one predicted it. God alone foretold it.

Why does God foretell the future? Three things and we're done. Number one, to prove that he is God. Do you see it here? Tell us the future so that we may know that you're God.

You can't do it. OK, I'll do it. I'll tell you about a guy named Cyrus who's going to come and do thus and thus and thus. And then it happens that he might be proven to be the real God alone.

Did you know that non-Christian religions do not hold prophecy conferences? But believers in Jesus do. Because the God of a Bible is a God who knows the future and declares it.

David Vaughn was telling me last week that Islam's Koran does not have any prophecies. Their Allah does not know the future.

[46 : 22] But our Bible is full of them. Someone has counted some 2,500 promises. Screaming to us that the God of the Bible both knows and controls the future.

He alone is God. Some within evangelicalism have proposed a new view of God called open theism. Or the openness of God in which they posit that even God does not know the future.

How could he until you make your decision? And so God waits until you make your decision. And then he knows the future. Just as you and I. That is no harmless error.

If I've understood Isaiah 41, that is the ungodding of God. That is taking from God the one thing in Isaiah 41 that proves who is God.

He knows the future. And if God doesn't know the end from the beginning, then stop worshiping him. Worship Baal. Worship some good luck charm. But quit pretending that he is God.

[47 : 30] No. God claims to know the future. You say, well, anybody can claim to know the future. You know how he proves it? He predicts it. 2,500 times he predicts it.

And every time it's proven right. There's only a few hundred promises yet that aren't fulfilled. Why does God do that?

To prove that he alone is God. And the reason God knows the future is because he plans it. And then he brings it to pass.

Did you not see that in our memory verse? I foretold the former things long ago. My mouth announced it and made them known. Then suddenly I acted and they came to pass.

God is not just a spectator standing on the sidelines with perfect knowledge and he knows how it's all happening. And he just watches it. He knows it because he planned it.

[48 : 30] And then he brings it to pass. Suddenly I acted and it came to pass. And he raises up Osiris and he puts down a Nebuchadnezzar and he frees his people and he fulfills his plans.

And that's true of your God, dear Christian. He knows your future because he planned it and he controls it.

He planned it and he controls it. No, your life is not spinning out of control. People preoccupied with their trials need to remember the God who knows and controls the future.

And the second reason he foretells the future is that you might not fear but trust God and know his peace and comfort. And this is why it's found in this section on comfort, my people.

Tell them who I am. Tell them that I know all about where they're at. And I'm fulfilling my plan for them. They're my servant. Haven't rejected them. Cleansing them.

[49 : 33] I'm still going to use them. I'm going to so work for their good and my glory. That's our peace. Peace. Perfect peace. Our future.

All unknown. Jesus we know. And he is on the throne. Lastly, why does God foretell the future? Well, that we might expect all unfulfilled prophecies to come true.

I told you there's a few hundred that haven't come true yet. And the big one is that I am coming again. Jesus said.

And when I come, I'm going to save my people. And I'm going to judge all men. And I am going to assign in my judgment all men either to heaven or to hell for eternity.

That's not the spouting of some preacher. That's the prediction of the God of the Bible. Who constantly is predicting the future and fulfilling it.

[50 : 35] And we've had the privilege living at this point in history of looking back and seeing some 2,000 prophecies fulfilled just as he said. And one of the blessings is for us then to look forward to the few hundred that remain.

And say, I am expecting it all to happen just as he said. Are you expecting the day of judgment?

Well, you better. He said it's coming.

Are you ready for it? You see, he's revealed these things to us that we might be ready for it. How will you stand in that day? Will you stand with Christ who will answer for you and say, Father, yes, she has sinned.

But remember on Calvary, you punished her sin when you abandoned me. So look on me and

pardon her. Is that how you're going to stand in judgment with Christ as your Savior and Lord?

Are you going to go on rejecting him and come to that day all alone in your sin and guilt with nothing to say? And you will hear him say, depart from me.

[51 : 41] You curse it. I never knew you. And the wicked will go away into everlasting torments. It's all in the book. And he tells us in advance that we might expect it to be fulfilled.

But all who are in Christ in that day will not be condemned. Praise to his name. Let's sing from the overhead. Our response to this passage.

Give to the wind your fears, Christian. Our God is the God who controls our future. And if you're not a Christian, put your hope in Christ this day and join us in singing this song.

Shall we stand and sing from the overhead? Give to the wind thy fears.