

# WEEK 10

## ISAIAH 41

God's power and sovereignty prevail over fear. We can find strength in Him and His promises to bring justice.

## Preface

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**In the previous weeks**, we learned through Hezekiah's life about how to be faithful and obedient to God when facing challenges, and God's response to our sincere plea. **Last week**, we delved into the consequences of pride and God's divine wrath, though not without mercy.

**This week**, we will discuss God's power and desire to deliver His people which are evident in His sovereignty over nations, nature, and the future; we should not fear but trust in Him.

**Context:** As explained in the "Introduction" at the beginning of this study, Isaiah 40-66 is likely written by a different author(s) and intended for a different audience. Chapters 40-55 were written to the people during the exile, while chapters 55-66 were written for post-exilic audiences. Isaiah 40-66 mainly focuses on God's promise of redemption and grace, which includes writings about the coming "Messiah". In Isaiah 40-48, the prophet reminded the people of their coming deliverance because of God's greatness and their unique relationship with Him.

**History:** There are two possible interpretations of the historical context of Isaiah 40-44: either the military conflict with Sennacherib, the King of Assyria (701 BC), or Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylonia (587 BC). Nevertheless, to the original audience, Isaiah 41 gives a message of encouragement amidst military pressure. While the text uses legal terms, it is not a covenant lawsuit like in Isaiah 1, as there is no direct accusation against the accused.

## Observation

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1. Who was speaking and who was he speaking to?

*Leaders' note: God, Israel, the "islands" (v.1, v.5), the idols (v.21).*

*The "islands" refer to the unidentified nations surrounding Israel, possibly located on distant islands and coastlands. This is an imaginary call where God invites the Israelites and foreigners to gather and investigate the evidence of God's sovereignty.*

2. What was the response of the "islands" to God's actions in Isa. 41:2-4?

3. What were the pictures that God gave to strengthen the Israelites? (Isa. 41:10, 14-16, 17-20)

## Interpretation

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1. Based on the islands' response to God's assertions (Isa. 41:2-7), what does it say about their understanding of God?

2. Compare and contrast God's challenge towards the idols and how He revealed Himself (Isa. 41:7, 21-29). What does it say about God's nature and the things God is sovereign over?

*Leaders' note: God displayed **His authority, foreknowledge, and supremacy over idols**. This invites the islands/nations to recognize and align themselves with God's divine plan.*

3. Why should Israelites not fear? What are the relationships between God and His people that God reminded them of, to encourage them not to fear?

*Leaders' note: The Israelites should not fear if they truly know **God's character and power, His promises, and His relationship with them**. God reminded the people that they are God's chosen people. God is their God and their Redeemer, who is sovereign over the future and has promised a glorious future.*

## Application

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1. What are some examples of idols in our society? How can the futility of idols be seen in our society's reliance on wealth, technology, or power?
2. In what ways have we put our trust in "idols" or things apart from God during times of fear?
3. How can we live differently from the culture around us to display our reliance on God rather than on the world?

### Optional Follow-Up Exercise: Practicing the Daily Office

The Daily Office is a practice of intentionally creating pauses in our day to **be still, slow down, and be with Jesus**. It is easy to be preoccupied with our daily tasks and responsibilities, as we try to gain control over our life. The goal of practicing the Daily Office is to create a continual and easy familiarity with God's Presence each day. When we stop our activity and pause to be with God, we are declaring that God rules, and we do not.

Practical Instructions:

1. Choose a liturgy, depending on the time of the day that your group is meeting, and read through it together. Agree on a leader to facilitate the pace, or take turns reading and praying.
2. Read the text aloud, even if you are alone when you practice it throughout the week. Be sure to read it slowly, prayerfully, and thoughtfully.

Example resources:

1. Daily Office Prayer Guide by Peter Scazzero
2. <https://dailyoffice.app/>
3. <https://dailyofficeforall.com/>