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A Picture of Frustration: Isaiah 42:8-25

AFTER THE BEAUTIFUL PICTURE of the gentle but supremely effective work of the Servant in 42:1-7, the remainder of the chapter includes a number of very striking transition. Yet there is a definite progress of thought leading to the terrible frustration that is described in the last fourth of the chapter.

(8) I am the LORD, that is my name. I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven images. (9) See, the former things have come to pass; now I declare new things. Before they spring forth I am informing you of them.

Verse 8 might be thought of as parallel to verse 5 and therefore as an assurance that the powerful God will make sure the work assigned to His Servant will actually be accomplished. Yet this verse does not, as does verse 5, emphasize His power over nature. It merely declares that He will not give His glory to anyone else or His praise to idols. Therefore it seems best to consider it the beginning of a new paragraph rather than a continuation of the previous passage.

This assurance of God's unique position can easily raise in the mind of the listener a question as to how one can know that it is true, since all visible signs of God's power will have perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Again, as so many times in this section of Isaiah, the answer is given by a reference to God's ability to predict the future. He declares that the exiles can already see how precisely His former predictions have been fulfilled, and He promises to give additional predictions of events yet to come (v. 9).