

The Book of Isaiah

Chapter 44-45

I Am the LORD and Besides me there is No one Else

Chapters 44 & 45 are of the same thought. A thought that is encompassed by this verse:

Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. **Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. (Isa 44:8)**

God throughout the book of Isaiah has challenged all the supposed gods of this world. Can any of them do as God does? Do any have the creative power as God does? Can any foretell the future as God does? The answer is a continual NO!

In these chapters God will throw down the gauntlet as it were and make a prophetic prediction that will be fulfilled to the letter. Thus, proving once again that there are no gods like our God.

God Formed Israel (vss. 1-8): These verses ascribe the faithfulness of God to do what He said He would do in "helping" Israel be that great and mighty nation that He promised (vss. 1-2).

The blossoming of the Nation of Israel is still awaiting its fulfillment. Right now, they are metaphorically a dry and thirsty people. But one day God will cause His people to flourish as the grass of the field and blossom as the rose (vss. 3-4 cf. Isaiah 32:15-18; Ezekiel 36:27-35.)

It will be at this time that the Nation will say, "I am the LORD's" (vs. 5).

God's faithfulness to His calling of the nation when He brought them forth is seen in the following verses.

Thus saith the LORD that **made thee, and **formed thee** from the womb, which will **help thee**; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom **I have chosen.** (Isa 44:2)**

Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: **I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, **thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out**, as a thick**

cloud, **thy transgressions**, and, as a cloud, **thy sins**: return unto me; for **I have redeemed thee**. (Isa 44:21-22)

This shows to the nation who they were called to be and how God, regardless of their current situation will one day “blot” out their “transgressions” and their “sins”. Their sin of idol worship in turning unto other gods.

But how can it be that God’s chosen people could turn from worshipping the One true God unto idols, graven images made by their own hands?

God challenge to the Nation is: **Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.** (Isa 44:6-8)

You would think that all that God had done for the Nation would be enough for Israel to remain faithful in their devotion to God. But their sad historical account proves quite the opposite.

The Nation that “formed” a god (vss. 9-16). God formed man to praise Him: **This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.** (Isa 43:21). Man, however did not retain God in their knowledge and turned from the living and true God to serve gods.

Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah. (Jer 2:27-28)

To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor

save him out of his trouble. Remember this and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. (Isa 46:5-8)

Therefore, thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore, forgive them not. (Isa 2:6-9)

The goldsmith and silversmith make their gods (vs. 12). The carpenter makes his gods from the very wood and fire meant to warm and feed him (vss. 13-17). He does not consider how utterly ludicrous it is, for he is blind to his confused way (vss. 17-20 cf. Psalm 115:4-8). And while Israel may have forgotten God, He has not forgotten them (vss. 21), for God will “blot out” their transgressions and their “sins” and “redeem” them (vss. 22-24).

The utter inability of the soothsayers, diviners and wisemen that try and foretell the future God make known. Notice:

“Frustrateth the tokens of liars” - God made void all the signs and tokens they gave the people, that such and such things would come to pass, which did not, and which proved them to be liars:

“Diviners mad” - soothsayers, astrologers, and such sort of persons, who pretended to foretell future events; but their predictions came not to pass and they became mad.

“turneth wise men backwards and maketh their knowledge foolish” - The so called wise philosophers among the people, and their schemes of philosophy, which were confounded and destroyed, and proved foolish.

However, unlike all these prognosticators God can foretell future events. He is the God that can tell the end from the beginning: **“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”** (Isa 46:9-10)

Thus, confirms the word of His servant and performs the council of His messengers (verse 26a).

The remaining words of verse 26 through 45:3 is God foretelling the future.

Cyrus God's Shepherd (44:26-45:4): The following excerpt from my book on Ezra will be beneficial here. However, keep in mind that at the time Isaiah is prophesying Jerusalem is not destroyed, Babylon is not a world power and Israel is not carried away into Babylonian captivity.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-4)

The Decree of Cyrus (1-4): What is recorded in these opening verses of Ezra is the prophetic fulfillment of a miraculous sort. The prophetic announcement that finds its fulfillment here was first spoken about 176 years before; during the times of Isaiah. It was Jeremiah the prophet that give the prophecy concerning the duration of Israel's Babylonian captivity (Jere. 25:11-12), it is the prophet Isaiah that will give not only the name of the king that would make the decree for Israel to return to their homeland but also details concerning how it would be accomplished.

In the Book of **Isaiah in chapter 44**, God through the prophet Isaiah is rebuking Israel for following idols of their own making. Israel would worship idols of wood and consult them for everything: from daily needs to deliverance in battle (**44:15-16**). God tells Israel that He alone. All of Israel's so called "gods" can do what Israel's God can do. Can these false gods who Israel worship deliver them? Are they able to predict the future as He can:

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? (Isaiah 44:6-10)

It is God alone that can foretell the future and Him alone. In fact, in the Book of Romans Paul states that God **“calleth those things which be not as though they were.” (Romans 4:17).**

Now keep in mind what you are about to read was written down approximately 176 years before the events ever transpired (**Isaiah 712BC cf. Ezra 536BC**): God in this chapter of Isaiah 44 is going to “call it”, calling the king by name that God will use to bring His people back into their land:

That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. (Isaiah 44:28)

Now keep in mind that there was no king of Persia at the time this prophecy is foretold. Babylon is still the dominate world power, and king Cyrus is over 150 years from even being born. Its fulfillment is in the opening verses of Ezra chapter 1.

Now the detailed events concerning how this coming king of Persia will overthrow the Babylonians was proven to be accurate by the Greek historian *Herodotus*, who wrote about Babylon. This along with the discovery of the “*Cyrus Cylinder*” lends credence to the following account of the details concerning the capture of Babylon and the person and personality of king Cyrus. The following is prophecies brought to light.

Drying of the Euphrates River:

That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: (Isaiah 44:27)

The seemingly obscure verse was fulfilled when the armies of Cyrus came to conquer the city of Babylon. Babylon the city was massive in size, but its life blood was the Euphrates River that flowed through the middle of it. Massive bars or gates went down into the river stopping any unwanted ships from entering. Cyrus approaching the city

commanded his army to divert the Euphrates, lowering the flow of the river to mid-calf of his men. The people of Babylon were in the midst of a drunken celebration and did not notice the river levels being lowered.

The gates left open:

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; (Isaiah 45:1)

Once the river was low enough Cyrus's armies marched virtually unhindered into the midst of the city. There in the midst of the city they discovered that all the gates protecting the city from river invaders was left open fulfilling this prophecy.

Loosening the Loins of Kings:

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; (Isaiah 45:1)

As mentioned, when Cyrus's armies entered the city, all the city was in celebration, a great feast to their gods. Thus, Cyrus's armies took the city virtually without a fight. This drunken celebration is recorded in **Daniel chapter 5**. Belshazzar is toasting all his gods with the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem (**Dan. 5:1-4**). It was during this drunken feast that the handwriting on the wall appears to Belshazzar declaring, **"God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou are weighed in the balances and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."** (**Dan. 5:25-29**). It is at the appearance of the fingers of a man's hand that the following takes place:

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. (Daniel 5:6)

Thus, we have the fulfillment of Isaiah 45:1, **"I will loose the lions of kings"**. And in that very night was Belshazzar slain marking the beginning of the Medio-Persian empire:

***In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.** (Da 5:30-31)*

So then in the opening verse of Ezra you have Cyrus the king of Persia whom the LORD used to over through the Babylonian empire and making the decree for the Jews return

to their homeland: Thus, “the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia” (Ezra 1:1).

It is interesting to note as well that the famed historian Josephus states that king Cyrus had been shown the prophecy of Isaiah 44:28, which names him as the conquer of Babylon and was thereby eager to fulfil it:

2. This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his Prophecies. For this Prophet said, that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: “My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be King over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.” This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and an ambition seized upon him, to fulfil what was so written. So he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that “He gave them leave to go back to their own countrey, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, (3) and the temple of God; for that he would be their assistant; and that he would write to the rulers and governours that were in the neighbourhood of their countrey of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver, for the building of the temple; and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices.” (see Antiquity of the Jews xi. I).

The proclamation of Cyrus is given in **Ezra verses 2-4**, which was recorded and preserved to be recalled by Darius in its entirety (**Ezra 6:1-2**). The famous Cyrus Cylinder sheds light on the purpose of Cyrus in allowing the Jews to return to their land and build a house for their God. The inscription tells of Cyrus’s allegiance to Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonians, but goes on to tell of his respect for the gods of his subjects. Their images were treated as trophies by his predecessors, he now chooses to restore them to their sacred cities and rebuild their temples, hoping that these gods would pray for him daily to the gods of Babylon: Bel, Nebo and above all, Murduk¹.

This would account for the wording found in **Ezra verses 3 & 4** “... and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.” (3); “...the house of God that is in Jerusalem.” (4)

God of All Creation (45:5-19): The whole thought of these passages is God is the God of all creation, He created heaven and earth and all things there in. He created Jacob and

¹ Ezra & Nehemiah by Derek Kidner pg. 32, 33

surnamed Israel. How is it that His creation should turn away from Him unto idols. How is that God's creation should forget their Creator. This is the lament of God in these verses.

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. (Isa 45:5-8)

God is affirming who He is, He is the God of all the earth, the Maker of all things. He "girded" Israel and yet "thou hast not known me". More than just not known the God that created them, they:

"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?" (Isa 45:9-10)

However, God continually affirms His faithfulness to His "son" Israel:

"Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor

confounded world without end. For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.” (Isa 45:11-19)

God Alone (45:20-25): Regarding the plan and purposes of God it is Him alone that will do all things, for all things were created for His glory, power, and praise: **Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (Re 4:11)**

God’s eternal plan for heaven and earth will only be accomplished by God’s omniscience. There will be no one that will boast of anything apart from Jesus Christ, for every knee shall bow in that day:

“Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” (Isa 45:20-25)