

Isaiah Lesson 44

Isaiah Chapter 44

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Introduction: In chapter 43, we studied about the comfort God gave the Israelites and many of his promises to his chosen nation. We closed by studying the destruction that would come to the Temple due to their sin. In chapter 44, God through the prophet contrasts Himself with the folly of idolatry. The chapter concludes with the initial prophecy of Cyrus and his permission to rebuild the Temple.

I. Israel the Lord's Chosen

Isa 44:1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:

Isa 44:2 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.

The speaker clearly is Jehovah God. Once again, God refers to Israel (i.e., Jacob) as His servant. A classic illustration of God's election is also in view. God called (i.e., chose) a people in Jacob. To this day, Jews are God's chosen people. Likewise, in the new covenant, God has chosen a people in Christ—the church.

The creative work of God also comes into view.

(1) He created us all collectively in Adam.

(2) He formed each of us individually in our mother's womb.

Because He is our Creator and Maker, He also will be our helper. What a blessed thought. The truth remains for Israel as well as for the church. The conclusion is "Fear not, O Jacob, my servant." He who has created us and promised to help us will therefore take care of us.

The word Jesurun (or, Jeshurun) means "upright one" and is a symbolic name for Israel describing her ideal character. Once again, God reminds His people that He has chosen them.

Isa 44:3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods

upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Isa 44:4 And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

Isa 44:5 One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

God's promise is of blessing, both materially and spiritually. Water poured out to one thirsty is a blessing. Water upon parched ground makes it flourish. God promised to pour out of His Spirit upon His people and their coming generations. The pouring out of the Spirit is essentially an Old Testament term for the New Testament fullness of the Holy Spirit. The initial fulfillment of this prophecy took place on the Day of Pentecost. See Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2:16.

Joe 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Joe 2:29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Act 2:14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

Act 2:15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

Act 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

Act 2:18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

The ultimate fulfillment will be the outpouring of God's Spirit upon His people during the Millennium. "They" in verse 4 are those upon whom God pours out His Spirit. The greater idea is how that as God's Spirit is poured out upon His

people, they will be richly blessed. That, to a limited degree, takes place in this dispensation. In the Day of the Lord, the blessing will be all together.

In the Millennium when the Spirit of God has been poured out upon His people, no one will be timid or ashamed to proclaim themselves as God's people, nor will being a Jew ever be cause for antisemitism in that day. The thought of subscribing with one's hand unto the Lord is analogous to the modern idea of raising one's right hand and solemnly swearing. In that day, no one will be ashamed of being a Jew or of being the people of God.

II. Besides Me There Is No God

Isa 44:6 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.

Isa 44:7 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.

Isa 44:8 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.

God here describes Himself in double fashion. He is the ultimate King of Israel. Yet at the same time, He is the Redeemer of Israel. The two terms are in apposition one to another. Once again the eternity of God is set forth in that He is the first and the last. He is from everlasting (past) to everlasting (future). He had no beginning and He will have no end. Our God is eternal. This is the second of three times that God so refers to Himself in Isaiah. See Isaiah 41:4 and 48:12 as well as Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 2:19, and 22:13.

Rev 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

Rev 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Rev 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

In Isaiah, Jehovah God is described as the first and last. In Revelation, Jesus Christ is described as the first and last. Jehovah and Jesus therefore are obviously one and the same. Monotheism is more than an abstract religious philosophy. It is reality. There is no other God than Jehovah God. Besides Him,

there is no other God. The world abounds with pseudo gods. But they are fake and phony and exist only in the darkened minds of unregenerate men.

In light of God's unique glory and the nation whom He had called to be His witness (Israel), He asks, 'Who will declare my truth and knowledge?' If Israel won't, who will? The following context will reveal that even Israel was being drawn into the wickedness of idolatry. God asks, if Israel will not testify of Me, who will? If Israel will not be the spokesman of coming events revealed to them by God, who will do it? To that end God continues, "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."

There often is a fear of being a vocal witness of God in a hostile world. Jews in the day of Isaiah faced the same hostility as soul winners in the present day. The world does not want to hear and often intimidates Christians who do witness. To that God said, "Fear ye not, neither be afraid." God then proceeds to remind Israel that He has ordained them as His witness from times past. Again, He reminds them that there are no other gods. He is God alone. There is none other.

Isa 44:9 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.

Isa 44:10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?

Isa 44:11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.

Having laid the foundation of truth, Jehovah now describes the folly of those given to idolatry. Graven images, of course, were idols. God's point is all who make them, do so in vain. They are fools. All the physical adornments of an idol (i.e., its delectable things)—its gold and silver plating and other adornments—are worthless. The impotence and futility of idols are their own witnesses. They cannot see nor do they have any consciousness to understand anything. They are worse than worthless. Those that make them ought to be ashamed. Let the entire idol-makers guild be rounded up and be ashamed of their vile craft.

III. Even The Iron Smith will have no Strength in That Day

Isa 44:12 The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his

arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.

Isa 44:13 The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

Isa 44:14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.

Isa 44:15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

Isa 44:16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

Isa 44:17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

God describes the stupidity of those who make idols. A metal smith forges the metal image with the strength of his arms. He works straight through lunch trying to turn out an idol. A carpenter fashions a piece of wood into the figure of a man, making a wooden idol for his home. The same carpenter cuts down cedar, cypress, and oak trees for other purposes. He also even plants young trees for future use.

From the same pieces of timber, men burn some for heat. Some of it is consumed as firewood for a baking oven. And from the same lifeless chunk of timber, some of it is made into a 'god.' Fools then worship this chunk of wood and bow down unto it. Using the same log, the foolish craftsman then turns out an idol and calls it his god. He stupidly bows down to it, worships it, prays to it, and cries out to it for deliverance. Idolaters the world around have done so from time immemorial.

Isa 44:18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.

Isa 44:19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the

fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

Isa 44:20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Israel had hardened their hearts against their God and rebelled against Him allowed so He allowed a curse of spiritual darkness to fall over them. They saw but could not see. They heard but did not understand. They had become blind spiritually.

While making their dumb and impotent idols, none of them ever paused to consider that from the same log which they burned for fuel, they made their 'god' to worship. The folly and stupidity is apparent and so is the abomination into which Israel had deteriorated. Not only was their sin wicked, but it was also moronic. In creating abominable idols, Israel had made utter fools of themselves. What is the more appalling is that they had knowledge of the true God.

Israel could have feasted at the banquet of God's riches, but they chose to reduce themselves to eating spiritual ashes. They were deceived and their deceived hearts had led them astray to an inanimate piece of metal or wood that could never help or even discern right from wrong. Their wicked self-delusion had left them alienated from the true God.

IV. The Lord Redeems Israel

Isa 44:21 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.

Isa 44:22 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 44:23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

God's cry to Israel is to remember that they were His servants. He created them. They were His. Though they had turned their back on Him, He would not forget them. What a contrast. Though Israel had forgotten their God, He would never

forget them. Again, as in Isaiah 43:25, God reminds Israel that it was He and He alone who had blotted out their transgressions. Though their sin had been as a dark cloud before God, He had mercifully blotted out their sin in times past.

The mercy and faithfulness of God are apparent. He pleads with Israel to “return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.” Though Israel had rebelled against their God, in longsuffering, He implored for them to return. Though they had forgotten that God had redeemed them in ages gone before, He had not forgotten.

In verse 23, we find that the entire creation knows of God’s faithfulness to His people. They are enjoined to sing praise to Him. The greater scope of God’s redemption of His people through the ages may be in view here.

Isa 44:24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Isa 44:25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

Isa 44:26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

In as much as Israel had forgotten their God, He calls them to remembrance for their sakes. First of all, God reminded Israel that He remained their creator and it was He who formed them in the womb. Furthermore, He is the Creator of all things, including the heavens and the earth. It is Jehovah God that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish. It is God who thwarts the folly of the occult whether they be heathen idolatrous priests or the self-professed wise men of the world. God laughs at them with impunity.

The same God who created all things and overrides the machinations of the wicked is that same God who will keep His word in restoring Jerusalem and Judah. Implicit is the coming destruction and captivity of Judah. God promises His restoration in the midst of that judgment.

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

Isa 44:28 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.

The following text holds the key to understanding. The context shifts to the future restoration of Judah by Cyrus from Babylon. The reference here may be allegorical to the demise of Babylon by God's power. Babylon was situated between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The drying up thereof may be a metaphor for the fall of Babylon, the coming conqueror of Judah.

More specifically, it is the same God 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. Cyrus was not even as yet born. Yet, God would raise up this Persian king about 175 years later.

Persia had overrun Babylon during the latter years of Daniel and Cyrus became its king in about 536 B. C. In his first year of rule, he determined to allow Jews to return to rebuild their Temple at Jerusalem. See Ezra 1:1. Yet, in Isaiah's day, 175 years earlier, God foretold how that this gentile king would someday command the Jewish Temple to be rebuilt.

Ezr 1:1 *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,*

Ezr 1:2 *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.*

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Prov 4:18 *But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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