

Isaiah Lesson 45

Isaiah Chapter 45

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Introduction: We covered Chapter 44 last week, and found God dealing with Israel about their idolatry. We closed with the initial prophecy of Cyrus and his permission to rebuild the Temple. We continue on that topic this week finding Cyrus being the instrument of use by God. The focus then turns to Israel and the glory of Jehovah God, reminding them of all that God has done. Throughout the chapter, God reminds Israel that He created all things including Israel. He then called for all the earth to turn to Him.

I. Cyrus, God's Instrument

Isa 45:1 *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;*

Isa 45:2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

Isa 45:3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

Approximately 175 years before Cyrus sat upon his throne, God foretold how He would help him. This Persian king is called God's anointed. God had chosen him and ordained for him to perform His will. There can be little question that Cyrus was made aware of the 45th chapter of Isaiah as he attained his throne.

God used this Persian king to allow Zerubbabel and approximately 50,000 Jews and servants to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their Temple. God promised Cyrus in advance that He would help him. He would subdue hostile nations for him and would overturn hostile kings for him and open barred gates for him.

In short, God promised to bless Cyrus. Furthermore, God promised to help Cyrus fight his battles and would give him victory. It is apparent that Cyrus was aware of this. See Ezra 1:2.

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.

In addition, God promised Cyrus that He would give thee him the treasures of “darkness, and hidden riches of secret places”. Cyrus would know that the God of Israel is who called him by name. God spoke of him before he was born into this world. Jewish tradition holds that when Nebuchadnezzar was about to die, he determined to withhold his vast riches from his successor Evilmerodach. Nebuchadnezzar ordered his vast treasures to be encased in brass vessels and buried in the Euphrates River.

Rabbinical tradition declares that when the time came for Cyrus to order the rebuilding of the Temple, God revealed to him where the treasures of Nebuchadnezzar were hidden. In so doing, God verified to Cyrus that He was the God of Israel.

Isa 45:4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

The reason for God’s working in and through Cyrus is made clear. God purposed all along to remain faithful to His covenant people Israel. Even though Cyrus evidently was not a believer in Jehovah God, nor a descendant of those who received the promises of God, God made known His power to this gentile king for His own divine purposes.

It should have been extraordinary to Cyrus that his name appeared in Jewish prophecy 175 years before he became king of Persia. It was God who had promoted him, and God wanted him to know it.

Isa 45:5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

Isa 45:6 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.

Isa 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

Isa 45:8 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.

Long before Cyrus was born, God provided in Isaiah a prophecy lesson as to who He was. There is no other God than Jehovah God. It was He who had girded Cyrus with strength, even though Cyrus, at the time, did not know Him. God was about to work through Cyrus so that men from east to west might know there was no other God than Jehovah.

The east and west here may refer to the Persian empire. Judah was in the west and Babylon and the other major cities of the empire were to the east. God was about to make known to the superpower of that day that there was no other God than Him. It was Jehovah God who made day and night. He is the Creator of all. Moreover, it is He who makes peace and evil. The word evil (er rah) can refer to trouble and adversity as well as to moral wrong.

God is never the author of that which is morally evil. However, it remains His prerogative to bring trouble as He so chooses. All things are in His power. God calls the very heavens as a witness. Of interest is the call for the very heavens to rain down righteousness. Indeed, the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). Both Psalm 50:6 and 97:6 speak how the heavens declare His righteousness. Justice and righteousness have their source in heaven.

In allegorical fashion, God calls for it to rain down righteousness. In a similar fashion, God calls for the earth itself to bring forth salvation and then for righteousness to spring up from the earth. The greater thought is that not only has God created the heavens and the earth, He also is the author of all moral and spiritual truth—righteousness. He is Creator of all, both material and spiritual. The lesson is for Cyrus and all else who will read.

Isa 45:9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

Isa 45:10 Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

A double warning is issued to all who will oppose God. “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker”. It is foolish to challenge one’s Creator. Potsherds were pieces of clay pottery. God, in effect, said, ‘let such menial things contend amongst themselves.’ What folly is it for a man to contend with His Creator? It is like a lump of clay challenging the potter and accusing him of having no power or ability to mold it. Yet, men have done so to God through the ages. In a similar

fashion, God pronounced another woe. “Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?” What folly for a youth to ask his parents why did you bring me into this world. Yet, Israel had essentially done the same to their God.

Isa 45:11 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.

Isa 45:12 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.

Isa 45:13 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.

God describes Himself in threefold opposition: (1) Jehovah, (2) the Holy One of Israel, (3) and the Maker of Israel. The holiness of God, as well as His creative work, are in view. The thought is still directed to Cyrus. God challenges him to ask about his sons (i.e., Israel). ‘Ask about what I have done.’ The answer to this challenge is “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.”

It is Jehovah God who is the Creator of not only the earth itself but of humanity as well. It is He who created the heavens and their celestial bodies. It is God who justly raised up Cyrus as king of Persia. It was God who would providentially direct the way of this gentile king. God would put it in the heart of Cyrus to allow the rebuilding of the Temple and, by extension, the city of Jerusalem.

God would bring about the first phase of the restoration of Jews to their land. Moreover, Cyrus would not demand any payment or ransom for his permission to them to return. It was God who ordained all these things to come to pass.

II. The Lord, the Only Savior

Isa 45:14 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.

Isa 45:15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

Isa 45:16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.

As Cyrus dealt kindly with Ezra and the Jews in his kingdom, God would cause other nations such as Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sheba (Sabeans) to submit themselves to this Persian king. They would come to him noting that surely the God of heaven was with him.

In verse 14, we find that during the Old Testament era, God had revealed Himself only to Israel and to that degree had hidden Himself from the other nations. As the prophet receives this truth, he praises Jehovah for being their God and their Savior. Once again, the warning against idolatry is issued. The message may be for the benefit of Cyrus.

Isa 45:17 But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

Isa 45:18 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.

Isa 45:19 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.

Though the confusion of idolatry certainly abounded, God promised, “But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” Salvation is of the Lord, period! It is He who would deliver Israel and it is He who saves those who trust Him to this day. Moreover, His salvation is forever. It is everlasting. No one who trusts God for salvation shall ever be ashamed or confounded for having done so.

The latter phrase, “world without end,” essentially means ‘forever and ever.’ The salvation of God is everlasting. That was true then. It is true now. God does not provide salvation and then snatch it back when we fail. Salvation has always been and will always be in the Lord! No one will ever be ashamed for having trusted Him.

In verse 18, God makes clear that He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. This, no doubt, is for the benefit of Cyrus as well as backslidden Israel. God's purpose in creating the earth was for human habitation. He is the exclusive God and there are no other gods.

God's purposes have not been secret. He has made known His will. Furthermore, He never instructed Israel to seek Him in vain. Backslidden Jews may have thought that. But that was not the case. God's purpose and will are grounded in righteousness. His Word to Israel and to mankind, in general, has been altogether just. A lesson for so ordering our lives is inherent herein.

Isa 45:20 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.

Isa 45:21 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.

God calls for His people to return to their land under Ezra. Those "escaped of the nations" refers to the remnant of Israel who soon would be refugees in Babylon. They were in the land of idolatry (Babylon and Persia). Israel had messed with idolatry. Now they were refugees in foreign lands which abounded with idolatry.

With the Babylonian captivity looming ahead, God challenged those in Israel fond of idols to let those who have ignored their God in order to mess around with idols confer together. God asks, Have your idols been your creator? Rather, it is Jehovah who is God alone. It is He who is just and the Savior. There is no other God!

Isa 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

Isa 45:23 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.

God cries out to all nations. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." The simplicity of salvation is at hand. Even as those afflicted in Numbers by the serpents needed only to look in

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faith to the brazen serpent. All nations need only to look to Him who has been judged for our sin.

The cross of our Savior is certainly in view. The work of Christ is at hand. To this day, sinners need only look unto Him by faith and be saved. He is God and there is no one else! God swears upon His own integrity. He has given forth His word in righteousness. It will not return void. The day is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. The day is coming when idolatry will be abolished. That day is when our Lord returns in power and great glory. What a day that will be! . The Apostle Paul quotes from this portion in both Romans 14:11 and Philippians 2:10.

Rom 14:11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

Php 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

Php 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Isa 45:24 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.

Isa 45:25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

In Christ is our righteousness and strength. To Him, all men will someday come. Moreover, on that day, all His enemies will be chagrined that they ever were angry against Him. The prophecy here clearly has shifted to that of the Messiah. The day is coming when the entire nation of Israel will be justified by their Messiah. Paul spoke of this in Romans 11:26. God through the prophet foretells the day of Israel's conversion to Christ.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

Rom 11:27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

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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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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.