

August 15

Scriptures: Read Isaiah 45, 46 & 47

Key Verse: “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” (Isaiah 45:22)

Overview

Chapter 44 closes with a remarkable prophecy which continues in chapter 45, concerning the coming of Cyrus, the heathen king of Persia, whom God had chosen to be the instrument whereby He would deliver His people from the hands of the Babylonians (Chaldeans, cf. Jer. 50:35-38). God foretold this event and named “Cyrus” about 150 years before he was even born! The Lord had worked in nature to prepare the circumstances that would enable Cyrus and his army could penetrate the strongly fortified (double-walled) city of Babylon. Historical accounts tell us that in 539 B.C., Cyrus’ men crawled into the city through a dried up water channel (44:27), and once inside they opened the double gates to allow the rest of the army to charge in (45:1b); they then plundered the city, found the royal treasury, and took a great amount of riches (45:3).

Many years earlier, Isaiah prophesied these exact things and emphasized that it was God who made it all possible. Through this very specific prophecy, the Lord desired all people in the world to know that He alone was God, for an idol, or even Satan, cannot foresee the future (45:6). After Isaiah recorded this prophecy, it must have caused quite a lot of ridicule, for it was unheard of for a heathen king to not only free slaves but, out of his own good will, aid in their return and the rebuilding of their homeland (44:28; 45:13; Ezra 1:1-4, 7; 6:7-8). When God would bring this to fulfillment, all of the idol worshippers would be put to shame, and many Gentiles would turn to serve the only true and living God (45:14-16, 20-21). Likewise, when the Lord would fulfill His wonderful prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, then people all over the world would look to Him and be saved, and the Lord solemnly declared that this prophecy will indeed come true. At the time of Jesus Christ’s second coming, every knee shall bow to Him and declare that He is Lord (45:22-23; Phil. 2:10-11). Those who have not believed in Him will be put to shame, but those who are of the spiritual Israel, the true children of promise who, by faith have been reckoned as sons of Abraham (Rom. 9:6-8; Gal. 3:7), “shall be justified, and shall glory” (45:25; Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:21-24; 5:1; 1 Thess. 2:19-20).

Chapter 46 begins by illustrating how ridiculous it is to worship idols. With the advance of the Persian army under Cyrus, many Babylonians fled as refugees and were deported as captives, carrying with them their helpless idols, the Babylonian deities Bel (“Baal”) and Nebo (Bel’s son), as baggage upon their cattle. The idols do not deliver, move, or answer; they cannot even save themselves. But the Lord God truly helps, delivers, carries His people, and communicates with them. He asks them to remember the past and how He had cared and provided for them, stressing repeatedly that He alone is God, “there is no other” (46:9). Whatever the Lord declares shall indeed come to pass. Just as He promised and saw to fulfillment the deliverance of His people through Cyrus (the “bird of prey from the east”) (46:11), so too He promises to bring His “righteousness” and “salvation”, which “shall not be far off” and which “shall not linger” (46:13;

Heb. 10:37). For those who call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus, He is an ever-present help (Ps. 46:1).

Chapter 47 prophesies the fall and humiliation of Babylon due to the judgment of God. It must be remembered that Isaiah is writing of these things many years before Babylon was a nation of any significance; this makes these prophecies truly amazing for they were fulfilled just as Isaiah had foretold. He pictures Babylon as a woman living in luxury, who was proud, arrogant, and trusting in her wealth, wisdom, astrology, and witchcraft. But the Lord would judge her for these very things, as well as her excessive cruelty to His people whom He had given into her hands for the purpose of His chastisement Babylon would suddenly be made lowly, poor, despised, and humiliated, like a captive slave girl who would be put to shame. The most terrible of things that she thought would never happen to her did in fact happen at the hands of God (47:8-9), and none of the cultic astrologers or idols would be able to save her. The sins of Babylon, such as self-glorification, blasphemy, and the way she felt herself to be invincible, as well as trusting in astrology, are prevalent sins today. The world would do well to heed this warning.

Prayer

Lord God Almighty, You have clearly pointed out to us that we must not trust in any person or thing other than Yourself. We recognize that there is no other who can compare to You. You alone are the "I am", the only true God. Please give us grace to serve You more truly than ever before.