

# Isaiah 44 - God's Blessing of Israel; A Response to Idol Worship; A Call to Remembrance and Joy

## III. Prophecies of comfort (Is 40:1—66:24)

(1) Promises of Israel's deliverance from Babylonian captivity because of God's attributes (Is 40:1—48:22)

(D) Deliverance based upon God's future promises for Israel (Is 43:1—44:5)

(f) Spirit's outpouring (44:1-5)

(E) Deliverance based upon his supremacy over idols (44:6-23)

(a) God's uniqueness (44:6-8)

(b) God's superiority in comparison to idols (44:9-20)

(c) God will remember Israel (44:21-23)

(F) Deliverance based upon prediction of Cyrus (44:24—45:13)

(a) Cyrus as shepherd to restore the Temple and Jerusalem (44:24-28)

## Isaiah 44

(f) Spirit's outpouring (44:1-5)

1 "But now listen, **Jacob**, My servant, And **Israel**, whom I have chosen:

1 "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel, whom I have chosen:

1 "But now listen, Jacob my servant and Israel whom I have chosen:

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

- Jacob and Israel, two names used antithetically. Jacob's name was changed to Israel.

— Generally, once changed it stays changed (e.g., Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah).

However, Jacob is an exception.

— The name "Jacob" is used when he is being carnal, and "Israel" when he is being spiritual (faith, the one of the promise)

— The same with the nation Israel. Here Isaiah uses both terms. Not two people, but two sides of the same nature.

— "Jacob" means supplanter (and even Jacob is justified, Rom 8:30)

2 This is what the LORD says, *He* who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you: 'Do not fear, Jacob My servant, And **Jeshurun**, whom I have chosen.

2 Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you,  
'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

2 This what the LORD says, the one who made you, formed you from the womb, and who  
will help you: "Don't be afraid, Jacob my servant, and Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

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.

- "...Jeshurun" - poetical name for Israel (Deut 32:15; 33:5,26); means "the upright ones"

3 'For I will pour water on the thirsty *land* And streams on the dry ground; I will **pour out  
My Spirit** on your offspring, And My blessing on your descendants;

3 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty *land* And streams on the dry ground; I will pour  
out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants;

3 For I'll pour water upon thirsty ground and streams on parched land. So will I pour my  
Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing upon your descendants.

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:

- "...pour our My Spirit" - Joel 2:28-32; happened (began) at Pentecost, and is yet to  
happen to Israel (Cf. Is 32:15)

— There is no terminus: Peter indicates that it has begun, and it will be characteristic of the  
end times

4 And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.'

4 And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.'

4 They'll spring up as among the green grass, like willows by flowing streams.

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

5 "This one will say, 'I am the LORD'S'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And  
another will write *on* his hand, 'Belonging to the LORD,' And will give himself Israel's name  
with honor.

5 "This one will say, 'I am the LORD's'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And  
another will write *on* his hand, 'Belonging to the LORD,' And will name Israel's name with  
honor.

5 One will say, 'I belong to the LORD,' and another will call himself by the name of Jacob;  
still another will have written on his hand, 'the LORD's,' and will adopt the name of Israel."

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.

(E) Deliverance based upon his supremacy over idols (44:6-23)

(a) God's uniqueness (44:6-8)

6 "This is what the LORD says, *He who is* the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of armies: '**I am the first and I am the last**, And there is no God besides Me.

6 "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.

6 This is what the LORD says, the King of Israel and its Redeemer— the LORD of the Heavenly Armies is his name— "I am the first and I am the last, and apart from me there is no God.

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.

- "...I am the first and I am the last" - a path to witness to Jehovah Witnesses: Is 41:4; 44:6; 44:8; 48:12; Rev 1:11,17; 22:13; (then) 2:8!

— See Tag: **Jehovah Witness**

7 'Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; And, let him confront Me Beginning with My establishing of the ancient nation. Then let them declare to them the things that are coming And *the events* that are going to take place.

7 'Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place.

7 Who is like me? Let him proclaim and declare it, and lay it out for himself— since he made an ancient people. And let him speak future events; let them tell him what will happen.

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.

8 'Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced *it* to you and declared *it*? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any *other* Rock? I know of none.'"

8 'Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced *it* to you and declared *it*? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any *other* Rock? I know of none.'"

8 Don't tremble, and don't be afraid. Didn't I tell you and announce it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? There is no other Rock— I don't know of any."

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.

Here is the two-part test for anyone who would be God:

- (1) Accurately recall every event of the past
- (2) Accurately predict every event of the future

Of all the so-called holy writings, only the Bible answers this challenge. Other "gods" require that you take them at face value, offering neither evidence of their existence nor proof of their trustworthiness. But ours says, "I'll prove that I'm real and that you should trust me."

### **The Futility of Idolatry**

There is in this chapter a brilliant and bitterly devastating satire against idolatry. This is the recurring theme of this particular section (v9-20 is a polemic; the high point will come in Is 46).

(b) God's superiority in comparison to idols (44:9-20)

9 Those who fashion an idol are all futile, and their treasured things are of no benefit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

9 Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

9 Now, all the forming of images means nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Their own witnesses cannot see, and they know nothing. So they will be put to shame.

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.

10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no benefit?

10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit?

10 Who would shape a god or cast an image that profits nothing?

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

11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them be put to shame together.

11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.

11 To be sure, all who associate with it will be put to shame; and as for the craftsmen, they are only human. Let them all gather together and take their stand. Then let them be terrified—they will be humiliated together.

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.

**12** The craftsman of iron *shapes* a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary.

**12** The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary.

12 The blacksmith prepares a tool and works in the coals, then fashions an idol with hammers, working by the strength of his arm. He even becomes hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint.

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.

13 The craftsman of wood extends a measuring line; he outlines it with a marker. He works it with carving knives and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of mankind, so that it may sit in a house.

13 *Another* shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house.

13 The carpenter measures it with a line; he traces its shape with a stylus, then fashions it with planes and shapes it with a compass. He makes the idol like a human figure, with human beauty, to be at home in a shrine.

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.

14 He will cut cedars for himself, and he takes a holm-oak or *another* oak and lets *it* grow strong for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a laurel tree, and the rain makes it grow.

14 Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises *it* for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow.

14 He cuts down cedars, or chooses a cypress tree or an oak, and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. Or he plants a cedar, and the rain makes it grow.

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.

15 Then it becomes *something* for a person to burn, so he takes one of them and gets warm; he also makes a fire and bakes bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a carved image and bows down before it.

15 Then it becomes *something* for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it.

15 He divides it up for people to burn. Taking part of it, he warms himself, makes a fire, and bakes bread. Or perhaps he constructs a god and worships it. He makes it an idol and bows down to it.

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 worshipping it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over *this* half he eats meat, he roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire."

16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over *this* half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire."

16 Half the wood he burns in the fire, and over that half he places meat so he can eat. He sits by its coals, warms himself, and says, "Ah! I am warm in front of the fire."

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:

17 Yet the rest of it he makes into a god, his carved image. He bows down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Save me, for you are my god."

17 But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god."

17 And the rest of it he makes into a god. To blocks of wood he bows down, worships, prays, and says, "Save me, since you are my god."

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

**18** They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see, and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.

**18** They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.

18 They don't realize; they don't understand, because their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds, too, so they cannot understand.

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

19 No one remembers, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat *it*. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I bow down before a block of wood!"

19 No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat *it*. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!"

19 No one stops to think. No one has the knowledge or understanding to think—yes to think!—"Half of it I burned in the fire. I even baked bread on its coals, and I roasted meat and ate it. And am I about to make detestable things from what is left? Am I about to bow down to blocks of wood?"

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?

20 He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has misled him. And he cannot save himself, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

20 He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

20 He tends ashes. A deceived mind has lead him astray. It cannot be his life, nor can he say, "There's a lie in my right hand."

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?

(c) God will remember Israel (44:21-23)

**21** "Remember these things, Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant, Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.

**21** "Remember these things, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.

21 "Remember these things, Jacob, Israel, for you are my servant. I have formed you; you are a servant to me. Israel, you must not mislead me.

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.

22 "I have wiped out your wrongdoings like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."

22 "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."

22 I've wiped away your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist. Return to me; because I've redeemed you.

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.

- God will forgive/remove Israel's sins during their regeneration (Cf. Jer 31:31-14; v1-5)

### **Hymn of Praise**

23 Shout for joy, you heavens, for the LORD has done *it!* Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break into a shout of jubilation, you mountains, Forest, and every tree in it; For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, And in Israel He shows His glory.

23 Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done *it!* Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the LORD has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.

23 "Shout for joy, you heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout aloud, you depths of the earth! Burst out with singing, you mountains, you forest, and all your trees! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and will display his glory in Israel.

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.

(F) Deliverance based upon prediction of Cyrus (44:24—45:13)

(a) Cyrus as shepherd to restore the Temple and Jerusalem (44:24-28)

**24** This is what the LORD says, *He who is* your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb: "I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth alone,

**24** Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, "I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone,



24 "This is what the LORD says, your Redeemer and the one who formed you in the womb: 'I am the LORD, who has made everything, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth— Who was with me at that time?—

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;

25 Causing the omens of diviners to fail, Making fools of fortune-tellers; Causing wise men to turn back And making their knowledge ridiculous,

25 Causing the omens of boasters to fail, Making fools out of diviners, Causing wise men to draw back And turning their knowledge into foolishness,

25 who frustrates the omens of idle talkers, and drives diviners mad, who turns back the wise, and makes their knowledge foolish;

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

26 Confirming the word of His servant And carrying out the purpose of His messengers. *It is I* who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise her ruins *again*.

26 Confirming the word of His servant And performing the purpose of His messengers. *It is I* who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise up her ruins *again*.

26 who carries out the words of his servants, and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, "It will be inhabited," and of Judah's cities, "They will be rebuilt," and of her ruins, "I'll raise them up";

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:

27 "*I am* the One who says to the depth of the sea, 'Dry up!' And I will make your rivers dry up.

27 "*It is I* who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make your rivers dry.

27 who says to the watery deep, "Be dry— I will dry up your rivers;"

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

28 "*It is I* who says of **Cyrus**, '*He is* My shepherd, And he will carry out all My desire.' And he says of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"

28 "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"

28 who says about Cyrus, "He's my shepherd, and he'll carry out everything that I please: He'll say of Jerusalem, 'Let it be rebuilt,' and of my Temple, 'Let its foundations be laid again.'""

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.

- "...Cyrus" - predicted by name 200 years before Israel was released from Babylonian captivity. Also study Josiah in 1 Kings 13:2 written 300 years before his birth, and Dan 11, which was written 300 years before its events.

— When Isaiah wrote this, Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed. Yet, here he notes that even the foundation will be rebuilt (implying at the time of writing that it will be destroyed).

### **Nebuchadnezzar's Successors**

- Amel-Marduk (562-559 BC)
  - Ruled but two years
  - "Evil-Merodach" (2 Kings 25:27; Jer 52:3)
- Neriglissar (559-555 BC)
  - Son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar
  - "Nergal-Sharezer" (Jer 39:13)
- Labashi-Marduk (555 BC)
  - Lasted only 9 months
- Nabonidus (553-536 BC)
  - Absented to N. Arabia
  - His son Belshazzar was co-regent

Soon after his election, Nabonidus led the army to Palestine and Northern Arabia, leaving his son Belshazzar as co-regent in Babylon. Nabonidus' decision to stay in Arabia resulted from his unpopularity at home as much as from his desire to found a settlement there with exiles from Palestine.

### **The Conquest of Babylon**

October 12, 539 BC, Cyrus' general captured Babylon without a battle.

*The Persians diverted the River Euphrates into a canal upriver so that the water level dropped "to the height of the middle of a man's thigh," which thus rendered the flood defenses useless and enabled the invaders to march through the river bed to enter by night.* — Herodotus

### **The Letter to Cyrus**

When Cyrus made his grand entrance Daniel presented him with an ancient scroll of Isaiah, which contained a personal letter addressing him by name. [Josephus, *Antiquities*, XI, I, 2] Isaiah had died 150 years before Cyrus was born!