

Isaiah 44-45 • "Who is like me? Let him proclaim it."

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We saw last week how God powerfully and prophetically spoke to the nation of Israel foretelling a time of great blessing that would be poured out. And what we're seeing again in the scripture, like we've seen so many times, is this Law of Double Reference. This principle that we see in the Scripture where God will speak prophetically of a time in the relative near future, but it will also speak of a greater and more distant fulfillment in the distant future and this is one of those.

I want to remind you that Isaiah is ministering during a time in Israel's history where the northern kingdom has already been taken captive by the Assyrians and the southern kingdom is still perking, but they're going downhill. And they will eventually be conquered by the Babylonian army and they will be carried off into exile.

Jeremiah is the one who tells us that, that exile will go for 70 years and yet, even though Isaiah is living at a time long before those things took place, he's going to speak about them prophetically. In fact, he's going to speak in this chapter so specifically about Judah; the southern kingdom, actually, he'll just refer to it as Israel.

He'll speak about them coming back to the land, being brought back after their 70 years of exile and in this chapter, he's going to name the man who will bring about that deliverance and that return to their land. Probably about 160 years before the man was born and about 200 years before he actually gave the decree for the exiled Jews to come back into their land.

But remember, when Isaiah is writing this, Babylon is not even a world power, Assyria is the world power. Babylon will come to be a world power, they will eventually conquer Judah. They will take them captive for 70 years and then they will release them and let them come back home to build the temple and ultimately to build the city. And Isaiah is going to talk about it years in advance.

Do you know, it's funny, I read through some of my commentaries, and the prophecies here are so profound, they're so incredible that certain

commentators, just they can't take it. And they have to say, well, we think that maybe from chapter 39 or so from Isaiah, there was a second Isaiah who wrote much later, who wrote after the nation of Israel went into exile and after they had returned.

And they say that because it's just too much for them to believe that God can talk about things before they happen and yet, you know what? That's what these chapters are largely about.

God said in the last chapter, 43, and He's going to say it again in this one, I am the God who speaks things before they happen and then He's going to do it! But there are some people who will say, yeah, God speaks before they happen, but He didn't this time. It's really dumb. But anyway, let's get into some of these verses, this is so great.

Isaiah 44, verse 1, He says, *“But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!”* (ESV) And you'll remember He referred to Israel in the last chapter as, His chosen.

“² Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.” Now, it's kind of interesting. I don't know why God does it, but He often refers to Israel by a plethora of names and you'll remember that Israel is the name that was given to Jacob. Jacob was told after he wrestled with the Lord that your name will now be Israel.

But He still refers to Israel as Jacob. But notice He also refers to him as Jeshurun, which is a poetic synonym for Israel. It's used in one other place in the whole Bible and that's in Deuteronomy, and it means, the upright one.

And God is using that term specifically here, now, because in these chapters, God is speaking to the nation of Israel as if they are restored, as if they are regathered, and as if they have been perfected.

We'll see that as we go on, look when He goes on, verse 3. He says, *“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. ⁴ They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams.”* And again, He's making reference to about 200 years in the future.

That's the short term prophetic fulfillment when Israel will be regathered to the nation after 70 years of exile. But He's also speaking far distant future to

something that hasn't come to pass yet and that is the Millennial Kingdom, and we'll talk more about that. And we'll see how some of the references He makes about Israel haven't possibly even been fulfilled yet and so they refer to a time in the future.

Now God speaks here about the many people who will turn to the Lord at that time. Look at verse 5, *“This one will say, ‘I am the LORD’s,’ another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and name himself by the name of Israel.”* And this is in the final restoration of Israel.

There is going to be a powerful impact on all of the other people groups that are remaining on the earth after the Great Tribulation and because Israel turns to the Lord so powerfully, these other people groups are going to respond to that incredible deliverance. And they are going to come to Jerusalem and they're going to say, I want to be, I want to be like you. I want to be the Lord's, I want to belong to the Lord, and it's just this powerful work.

“Thus says the LORD, (verse 6) the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.’ You know, this is one of those, another reference where we, like we saw in the last chapter where God says, I'm it, there aren't any other gods, I'm the only God. But you notice He says, *“I am the first and I am the last.”*

Do you remember what Jesus says in the Book of Revelation, we're not going to turn the camera, but for those who might be tuning in around this auditorium, we have several statements, we call them the I Am statements of Jesus. And over on our north wall, we have a quotation of Jesus from Revelation chapter 22, where He says, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”* That's Jesus talking, that's Jesus talking.

Now, notice YAHWEH speaks here in verse 6 and He says, *“I am the first and I am the last;”* and He says, *“besides me there is no god.”* You want proof that Jesus Christ is God? There you go. Take Isaiah chapter 44, verse 6 and Revelation 22:13 and put them together and you have a very clear declaration that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. *“I am the Alpha and the Omega.”* That's like saying I'm the A and the Z, I'm all, I'm the beginning and the end.

Verse 7, and then God says this, here's a great question. *“Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.”*⁸ Fear

not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.”

Notice how God lovingly chastens His people here, reminding them that He's the only one and He's the only one who knows what's going to happen. Who knows what's going to take place before it happens and the people of Israel are His witnesses of this prophetic insight.

It's incredible isn't it, that the people of Israel ever turned away from God. He showed them over and over and over and over and over again that He knew what was to come in the future. He spoke prophetically, He said, you're my witnesses of this, you've witnessed it. You've seen it over and over again, I've told you things, and then they came to pass.

Now, beginning in verse 9, the Lord speaks here of really, it's just the sheer stupidity of really embracing another God, like a carved image or something like that. We may not have carved images today that we worship, but we certainly have our gods, don't we?

Verse 9, it says, *“All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. ¹⁰ Who fashions a god or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? ¹¹ Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, (and look at this statement) and the craftsmen are only human.”* That's an interesting statement.

He's saying, those who carve gods out of wood, they're human themselves, so how can they make a God? How can a human make a God? He's talking about just, He says..., God is kind of saying, let's think this thing through. How can a human being make a God? They're just human themselves.

He says here in the middle of verse 11, *“Let them all assemble, let them stand forth. They shall be terrified; they shall be put to shame together.”* And in other words, all of them, all these people. Then He goes on to say, look at this, verse 12, *“The ironsmith takes a cutting tool and works it over the coals. He fashions it with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He becomes hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint.”*

Again, God is pointing out the fact that the person who's creating this God is subject to all of the failings and limitations of being human. He's making a God, but yet while he's doing the work, he's like, oh man, I'm hungry and I'm tired. I got to get something to eat or, I'm about to faint, where's some water? Then I'll get back to making a God. The Lord is saying, come on now, talk to me.

Verse 13, *“The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, (which by the way, he didn't create in the first place, God created man, but it says he created it, he makes this man) to dwell in a house. ¹⁴ He cuts down cedars, or he chooses (maybe) a cypress tree or (hey, we'll make this one out of) an oak and (he) lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it.”* This is God talking.

He says, have you ever noticed that these guys will go out into the forested area, and they'll look at a tree, and they'll say, now that, that's a fine tree right there. I'm going to take care of that here, because that'll produce some really good wood, and we'll be able to carve some idols with that puppy. And so He says, he lets it be nourished by the rain, who gives the rain? The God who created heaven and earth and so here's this guy, ignoring the God who created heaven and earth, who nourishes this wood, this tree, so that this guy can turn around and make a god out of it, right?

Verse 15, *“Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and (he) bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. ¹⁶ Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, “Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!” ¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!”*

Do you see what the Lord is doing here? First of all He's outlining just the sheer and utter foolishness of thinking that what grows from a tree that can be carved, however skillfully it may be able to be carved, can be made into a god. While He says the same wood you used to, make your dinner and he used some of that wood to burn and you warm yourself by it. In other words, some of that wood serves you, and then you serve some of that wood. How dumb is that?

Now here's what's interesting, Isaiah is prophesying here and we know that his prophecies will be read by the exiles when they are in the Babylonian kingdom prior to their release. They will read these things and God will open their eyes, they are not yet open, but God will open their eyes. Do you know, Christians, that after Israel was released from their exile in Babylon, they never were idolaters again, they never bowed down to pagan images ever again. God truly took care of that issue and He opened their eyes to see and to know and to understand just how incredibly stupid it is to bow down to a created, carved image.

And then check out verse 18 because this is their present spiritual condition. He says, *“They know not, nor do they discern, (which is to think it through and to know and to understand) for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. ¹⁹ No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, “Half of (that wood) it I burned in the fire; I also baked (some) bread on (some of the) its coals; I roasted meat and (I) have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?” ²⁰ He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and (for) he cannot deliver himself or say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?””*

Isn't that interesting? Now stop here for just a moment, because I need to talk to you about this, because some of this applies to where we're living right now, right now.

He says, Isaiah is saying, or actually the Lord is saying through Isaiah, that at this particular juncture in time, Israel is unable to look upon what they are doing and to realize, I have a lie in my right hand, right? It's saying, holding a poisonous snake in your right hand and denying it. There's no snake in my hand, right?

It's because he lacks discernment, he lacks the ability to be able to understand and God is saying through Isaiah that the reason for this is because, did you notice what He said here? He basically says, *“for he (and he's speaking of God) has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see.”* God has shut their eyes so they cannot see. Now be careful here.

God is not saying in this passage that He randomly goes around shutting people's eyes and closing their hearts so that they can never understand and die in their ignorance and whatever. It's not what He's saying, God is not random about such things. The Bible tells us clearly that He is not willing that any should be lost, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

God doesn't go around just hardening people's hearts because I want to..., I pick you, but I don't pick you. It's not what's going on here. In fact, the apostle Paul writes about this in the Book of Romans, and he gives us a progression of how these kinds of hardenings take part. Now I want to put up on the screen for you Romans chapter 1, verses 18 to 28, and this is going to go through several slides so bear with me. But he writes and he says,

Romans 1:18-28 (ESV)

...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

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A very important passage because that passage helps you and I to understand, there's a progression to these things. God has made Himself plain in creation, He has revealed himself in creation but man chooses to say, there's no God, all this evolved, right. They call it the Big Bang Theory or the Theory of Evolution but it's not a theory to them, they call it a theory, it's a fact. And if you try to deny it, you're going to be made to look incredibly stupid when the fact of the matter is God has removed because they refuse to acknowledge Him.

God has removed their sensibilities, God has removed their ability to reason now, and now they've been given over. Did you notice that? And this is where that darkening, this is where that hardening takes place. When someone walks in that unwillingness to acknowledge God and to receive God, instead rejects God, eventually after a period of time, a hardening takes place to the point where they just, they can't even think straight.

And really that's what Isaiah is saying here in chapter 44 when he talks about the fact that they can't see and they can't understand anymore because their hearts have been hardened. Their eyes have been shut and so forth and so on. I bring that up because, there's just a lot of that going around. I mean, this hasn't stopped.

From the days of Isaiah, men are still hardened against the Lord, why? Because they choose to harden their hearts, therefore the Lord hardens their hearts. It just, it's a progression.

Verse 21, look with me in your Bible. *“Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. ²² I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you. ²³ Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth*

into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and will be glorified in Israel.” That day is still coming.

*“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb:
“I am (YAHWEH) the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, (no it was not seeded from other aliens) ²⁵ who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish,*

²⁶ who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited,’ and of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins’; ²⁷ who says to the deep, ‘Be dry; I will dry up your rivers’;”

And then check this out, look at this last verse, *“²⁸ who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”*

This is incredible you guys. This is one of the most incredible prophecies in the Bible because in it, God names the man who He's going to raise up to fulfill His purpose to restore the temple and ultimately Jerusalem. And again, this prophecy was made some 200 years prior to Cyrus giving that order.

Some 200 years before the fact, God speaks it and speaks by name about this man named Cyrus and He continues to speak more about him in the next chapter.

Chapter 45, look with me there. *“Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, ...”* Now, I got to tell you something, stop there for just a minute. Some people really object to this, it's well, what in the world? Cyrus, he's a pagan king, he's the pagan king of a pagan nation.

Cyrus was the king of the Medo-Persian Empire that conquered Babylon, which happened, by the way, while the Jews were still there in Babylon. They got conquered by the Medo-Persians and it was Cyrus whom God raised up to actually release the people to go back to their homeland and rebuild the temple.

But anointed? He calls him his anointed? Yeah, don't get weirded out about that term. People use that term in such crazy ways today. It just means prepared for a special work and that special work was to send His people back home and He anointed him for that very work and to do, of course much more too.

But He says, *“Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, ...”* In other words, I've taken hold of him by the right hand and here's what I've taken hold of him to do. *“...to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, (I want you to take note of this next phrase, this is important, you'll see the importance to this in a moment) to open doors before him that gates may not be closed:”*

If you underline things in your Bible, underline that. If you don't underline them, just make a note of it in your brain, I'll get back to you in a moment. ² *“I will go before you (God says) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze (take note of that too) and cut through the bars of iron,*

³ *I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, (YAHWEH) the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.”* God says, I do this in your life so that you might know and understand it is I who call you by name.

Now, I told you to take note of a couple of things going on in that section of verses. Some of you may remember, if you've studied any time recently, the Book of Daniel or have a good recollection of that Book, you'll remember that in Daniel chapter 5, he actually records the takeover from the Babylonian kingdom when it fell to the Medo-Persians, he actually records it. That's that chapter about that creepy hand that appeared, you remember?

Belshazzar, the king, was partying it up, he had a thousand of his nobles and lords together, and they're just having a big party, they're laughing. Even though the Medo-Persian Empire is outside their city walls, they said, they can never get in here and we're going to celebrate the fact that they're just a bunch of nobodies and they'll never get in here.

And so they're wining and dining and hooping and hollering and suddenly God crashes the party and this creepy hand appears and writes on the wall, right? You remember that? And it says that all of the color flushed out of the king and his knees knocked together and he was like huh! and he called all of his wise men in and said, I want you, whoever can read this, I'll reward you handsomely.

Well, nobody could. Well, his wife, the queen finally comes in and she says, don't worry, there's this guy named Daniel who was an old man by this time. He'd been there his whole life, mostly, he was taken there as probably a teenager. So Daniel, he can do these sorts of things, so Daniel is brought in.

The king says, if you can read this, I'll give you great and wonderful gifts and Daniel says, keep your gifts, you're probably not even have time to give them to me anyway. He didn't..., that's a paraphrase, but he says, I'll tell you what it means. And he goes on to interpret that writing on the wall and he..., and it basically says, Belshazzar, your goose is cooked because God's got your number and tonight, tonight, your kingdom will fall.

Now, here's what you may not know, it is actually hinted at in these verses as to how it happened. Look again with me. Did you notice there in verse 1, God says, I take you by the by the right hand to subdue nations, to loose the belts of kings and then look at, *“to open doors before him that gates may not be closed.”*

Now, I want you to think about that for just a minute, because there was an ancient historian by the name of Herodotus, who actually wrote about how the city of Babylon fell when the Medo-Persian army took it that night, okay? Daniel doesn't give us the details, it's not that important. But this historian tells us that Cyrus was actually able to gain access to the city by diverting the flow of the Euphrates that actually flowed under the city walls of Babylon.

And so they had this constant source of water and they thought, we can stay here forever, we got the Euphrates running right through our city, right? Well, Cyrus diverted the Euphrates to a swamp, and he got the level of the water down so low that his men could walk, could wade through what remained of the Euphrates, and get into the city under the wall. It was essentially referred to as, the river gate.

But here's what's interesting. The historian goes on to write that there was another issue. You couldn't just get under the wall and get into the city. There was a huge bronze gate that stood in their way, right? It was absolutely enormous, but for some reason, inexplicably, it was left unlocked and Cyrus and his army came in under the wall.

The gate was open and they waltzed into the city and they took it without any bloodshed. They just took it because the people of Babylon were unsuspecting. Now, did you notice what he said, or what this historian tells us? The gate was unlocked, it wasn't..., it was just... How in the world? You got an enemy outside your gate, right? Outside your walls and the gate is unlocked.

But do you remember what God said? He says, I'm going to open doors before him and the gates may not be closed. Isn't that fascinating? So here, Isaiah uses

this prophecy to speak of something that's going to happen, many years in the future and it happened just that way.

Verse 4, *“For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, (He's talking to Cyrus here) though you do not know me. ⁵ I am (YAHWEH) the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, ⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, (that means to where it goes down) that there is none besides me; I am (YAHWEH) the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷ I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.”*

Wow, these are such amazing verses. We get a glimpse here of the Lord working in the lives of men for His namesake who don't even know Him, who don't even know Him. Do we see this in the other parts of Scripture? Absolutely. God working in the lives of rulers, people who are in positions of leadership. They don't know Him, but they're being used by the Lord.

And I love how God declares Himself as just the only God, the God who's sovereign and who uses people like that, even though some people object to it. We'll talk about that in a minute here too.

But He says in verse 8, *“Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it.”*

And this is a very interesting verse, I like this. We have no trouble understanding that God can command the clouds to rain down water on the earth, but did you notice? Here He talks about the clouds raining down righteousness so that salvation and righteousness might be fruitful. This is literally talking about God commanding the blessings of heaven to be poured out upon the earth.

And I believe that this is an outpouring of revival and new spiritual life that is to come. It was accomplished to a small degree when Cyrus let the people go home, but it anticipates the greater fulfillment of the Millennial Kingdom.

Now in the coming verses, 9 and following, God begins to speak of the objections and this is anticipating objections to come for the using of Cyrus.

Do you know that some people, some of the Jews really didn't like this, didn't like this idea of God using Cyrus to do this. I mean, when you talk about it, what are you doing, Cyrus? You see the Jews had this idea of Gentiles. They're all dogs, they all deserve hell, there's nothing good about them in any way, shape, or form. And here's God calling Cyrus His anointed, we don't understand that at all.

So there's an objection here and so God, beginning to anticipate that objection, says this in verse 9, look with me in your Bible. *“Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! (He says) Does the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles?’”*

Like criticizing, right? This is great you guys, you got to hear this because He's basically saying, does the pot criticize the potter? And go, what are you making here anyway? What's this? It doesn't even look like anything, this is ugly. Doesn't even have a handle, what are you doing? Does the pot say that to the potter? No, do we say that to God? All the time, all the time. We criticize God all the time, but He's basically saying, it makes as much sense as the pot criticizing the potter.

So He says, as He goes on here, verse 10. *“Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ or to a woman, ‘With what are you in labor?’”* Those are really, really dumb questions.

“Thus says the LORD, (verse 11) the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: ‘Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?’” What a great question, will you command me? Will you command me? Am I not the sovereign, eternal God? Will you command me? Boy, isn't that a great question?

Look what He goes on to say in verse 12. He's doing this to put you and I in our place. He says, *“I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. ¹³ I have stirred him up in righteousness, and I will make all his ways level; he shall build my city and set my exiles free, not for price or reward,” says the LORD of hosts.*”

Isn't that something? So God says in this last section, He says, listen, here's the deal, I created everything all right and I'm going to do what I'm going to do. And I've raised up Cyrus to do this and he's going to do it. He's going to set my people free but you know what? He's not going to do it for money, he's not going to do it for reward of any kind. He's going to do it because I laid on his heart and that's why he's going to do it.

Some 200 years later, Ezra recorded all this. Let me put this on the screen for you, Ezra chapter 1, look at this.

Ezra 1:1-3 (ESV)

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, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, (this is who Isaiah has been talking about) 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, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.

There it is, that's the proclamation of Cyrus and this is a powerful proclamation, right? Because God said it would happen 200 years before it happened and He called the man by name and that's pretty cool.

Now, in verses 14 and following, we are going to turn our attention back to Israel as we kind of close out here a little bit. But it says, “*Thus says the LORD: “The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours; they shall follow you; they (actually) shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: ‘Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.’”*”

And once again, these are prophecies concerning the time when Israel is regathered for the final time and turns to the Lord at the very end of the Great Tribulation. And this is one of the many passages in the Old Testament which speaks of the fact that the nations that remain on the earth will come streaming to Jerusalem because of God's incredible blessing on Israel at that time.

Verse 15, now this is an interesting verse. “*Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior.*” What is Isaiah saying there? You are a God who hides yourself, you hide yourself.

Well, let me tell you, first of all, what this passage isn't saying. It's not saying that God hides Himself from anyone who truly and genuinely seeks Him. Because we know from other scriptures, spoken even by our Lord and Savior, that if you seek, you will find if you knock, the door will be open. (Matthew 7:7-8)

So it's not saying that God hides Himself so that men can never find Him. This verse is simply repeating what Paul said to the Athenians on Mars Hill. Let me show you this from Acts chapter 17, look at this on the screen. It says,

Acts 17:26-27 (ESV)

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

And he made from one man every nation of mankind (he's talking about creation) to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, (look at this, read this) that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

Right? Why did God create this world that we might see it and go, you know what, this just couldn't happen, I'm sorry. You can add your millions, billions, and trillions of years up and this still isn't going to happen like this, I'm sorry.

The more we learn about microbiology, the more we know that things don't evolve in the sense that they're saying they do. Because so much of what we know today, just about a single cell, we have learned through microbiology, that if any part of that cell were missing, it wouldn't function at all, right? So it couldn't have evolved in that way. So creation is just one large clue leading people to seek God and when they do, guess what? They're going to find Him.

I had a guy write me here a couple of weeks ago and he said, “can you give me some scriptures that will help me understand that that Jesus existed as a real and true historical figure, can you show me?” Actually, he wanted some other... He wanted some scriptures and he wanted some other writings as well. So I shared some things with him, I said, “well, there are some, there's some historians who

wrote about Jesus, there's the early church fathers, some of whom were Jesus' disciples and there's this, and there's that." And then I said this to him, I said, "oh, and there's one other thing you can do, if you want to find out if Jesus really exists, ask Him, ask Him, ask Him." Just say, "if you're who you say you are and you're real, show me, reveal yourself to me." If there is a true seeking, a genuine seeking, God will do it, God will do it.

Sue and I have been watching testimonies on a YouTube channel called, One for Israel for a few months now and we've just been loving them. And over again, there's these Jews on this channel who talk about how they were raised in Judaism. Whether it was social, cultural Judaism or religious Judaism, but they were raised a Jew and yet they came to a place of hearing or learning something about Yeshua, Jesus, who most of them grew up thinking was a Catholic, truly. And then they finally open up the pages of the New Testament and they start to realize, this guy was a Jew. Starts off in Matthew, Jesus, the Son of David, His lineage and so forth.

They're blown away, but they're like, who is this guy? So eventually they come to a place of praying and say, Lord, show me, show me. If you are the Messiah, show me and God does over and over and over again, He shows them, because if you seek, you'll find, if there's a genuine seeking, right? So anyway, it's pretty cool.

Verse 16, it says, *"All of them are put to shame and confounded; the makers of idols go in confusion together. ¹⁷ But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity. ¹⁸ For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the (YAHWEH) LORD, and there is no other.*

¹⁹ *I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.' I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.*

²⁰ *"Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you survivors of the nations! They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save. ²¹ Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. ²² "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other." I love that verse, I love that verse.*

Verse 23, *“By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’”* Does that sound familiar? Check out the screen, Paul wrote something very similar to the Philippians when he said,

Philippians 2:10-11 (ESV)

...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Finishing out the chapter, it says, ²⁴ *“Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed (or who raged) against him.”* ²⁵ *In the LORD all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory.”*

Wow, incredible things that God has in store for Israel. God's not done with Israel, God's not done with Israel and the church does not take over for Israel. That's called Replacement Theology, and it's not biblical.

Replacement theology teaches that the church replaced Israel and now all of the blessings, the covenant blessings that were given to Israel, are now, belong to the church. Which completely denies the fact that Israel was given physical covenant blessings and we're given spiritual covenant blessings. We don't have physical covenant blessings, we have physical blessings. We have some physical blessings, but they're not covenant blessings.

We're told to keep our eyes fixed on things above, not on things below. That doesn't mean God doesn't bless His children from time to time in a physical way, He does. But that's not part of the covenant, God never promised you that.

God never promised you in the Word, this or that other thing, on a physical plane. Ours are spiritual blessings in Christ.