

- E. Do you want to know what God promises to men of faith and obedience? Read the New Testament!
- F. Do you want to know what God commands man to do? Read the New Testament!

III. AT THE END OF THIS AGE GOD IS GOING TO REVEAL HIMSELF ONCE AGAIN

- A. Historically, Verbally, Personally
- B. I Thess. 4:16ff; II Thess. 1:7-10; Titus 2:13; I Jn. 3:1-3; Jn. 14:1-6; Acts 1:9-11

IV. WHAT IS YOUR DECISION? GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO YOU PERSONALLY, VERBALLY, YOU HAVE HAD A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH GOD HERE, NOW!

HIS PERSONAL INVITATION TO YOU IS COME, RECEIVE, OBEY, TRUST.

THE BIBLE IS HIS LOVE LETTER TO YOU.

2. SOVEREIGN IN SALVATION, CHAPTER 45

a. OMNIPOTENCE

TEXT: 45:1-8

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah 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 the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut:
- 2 I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron;
- 3 and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel.
- 4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou

hast not known me.

5 I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me;

6 that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else.

7 I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things.

8 Distil, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, that it may bring forth salvation, and let it cause righteousness to spring up together; I Jehovah have created it.

QUERIES

- a. How will Jehovah loose the loins of kings before Cyrus?
- b. Why did God surname Cyrus for Jacob's sake?
- c. How may the "skies pour down righteousness"?

PARAPHRASE

This is what Jehovah says to Cyrus the man He has especially chosen and whose career of conquest and government Jehovah will guide and sustain. The Lord will subdue great world powers and strip emperors of their strength for him; He will open city gates and no one will be able to shut them against Cyrus. Jehovah says, I will be the One preparing your path of conquest. All obstacles will be removed. Doors of brass, barred with iron will not stand in your way. Secret treasures which these kings assume cannot be found will be given to you to the end that you may know that I am God and that it is I, the God of Israel, who called you by your name many years before you were born. I have called you primarily for the sake of My servant, Israel, My chosen people. I have prophesied your name long before your birth, even though you do not acknowledge

Me as the Only God. There is no other god. I, Jehovah, am sovereign in the affairs of all men. It is I, Jehovah, who will empower you in your conquests Cyrus, although you do not acknowledge Me. I will do this so that the whole world will have opportunity to know there is no god besides Me. I am Jehovah, and there is no other god. I create both light and darkness; I send both blessing and woe; I, Jehovah, am the creator of everything. I, Jehovah, have created all of heaven and earth and I will command it and use all My creation to bring about the blessings of salvation and righteousness which I have promised to Israel, My chosen.

COMMENTS

v. 1-4 ANOINTED: The word translated *anointed* is the Hebrew word *meshikho* a form of the word *messiah*. It is astounding to learn that Jehovah has "anointed" a pagan emperor to become a "messiah" for His people. Yet, the Lord has used many "servants" from among the heathen (see Daniel 7 & 8, Jer. 27:1-11) to fulfill His redemptive plan. It is apparent that Cyrus, in his deliverance of Israel, served as a type of the Messiah-Servant to come, Jesus Christ (see special study on Types in this volume). Cyrus was not born for more than a hundred years after this prophecy. Cyrus was born in a little province in north-western Elam and just south of Media. He came to power in about 559 B.C. He was actually Cyrus II, a descendant of Achaemenes (700-675 B.C.). Cyrus' own cylinder indicates he was thoroughly imbued with the idea that he was *the* man of destiny: (the opening lines are quoted here)

"Through all the lands he (Marduk) searched, he saw him (Cyrus), and he sought the righteous prince, after his own heart, whom he took by the hand. Cyrus, king of Anshan, he called by name; to sovereignty over the whole world he appointed him."

The rule of Cyrus meant for all the conquered world a renewed

and continuous political prosperity and a religious liberty unknown in the annals of other rulers. He was the protector and the bounteous promoter of the welfare of his subjects. Their deities and their methods of worship were graciously restored, and dignified by elevating them to their former positions. The peoples, also, who had been forcibly deported from their native lands, were restored by the king's decrees. This generous policy, in contrast with that of preceding rulers, gave Cyrus great influence and power over his subjects. Part of his popularity may have been due to the fact that he was an Aryan (Caucasian), with newer and freer ideas than those of Semitic potentates.

There is an interesting statement in Josephus to the effect that Cyrus read Isaiah's prophecy and was influenced by it to free the Jews (*Antiq.* XI.1.2.). It is not impossible! Cyrus was a man interested in the religion, culture, and history of all his subjects. In his proclamation (Ezra 1:1f; II Chron. 36:22f) Cyrus attributes his actions to a knowledge of what Jehovah "commanded" him to do. There were, as we have mentioned, other reasons for Cyrus' actions; (1) it was national policy to "restore peoples to their own dwelling places." (2) Palestine had been from time immemorial a buffer state between southwestern Asia and Egypt. To occupy and hold the strong fortress of Jerusalem was the first step toward the conquest of the rival power. If Cyrus could secure that advantage by aiding the Jews to rebuild and hold it, he would be setting up one battlement in the face of Egypt's army. For one of his next strokes, after Babylon, would be at the rival imperial power on the Nile. For more on Cyrus and the Medo-Persian Empire see *Daniel*, by Butler, College Press, pages 223-233 and 296-298.

There are three distinct reasons God uses Cyrus and speaks so intimately to him nearly 200 years before his birth:

- (a) Cyrus is to know that the God of Israel is the only God there is, (v. 3).
- (b) Cyrus is to serve Jehovah for the sake of Israel, (v. 4).
- (c) Cyrus is to serve Jehovah in order that all men may know Jehovah is the only God there is, (v. 6).

It is apparent that Cyrus was never converted to monotheism or the worship of Jehovah as the only God, for in many of his proclamations, he acknowledges Marduk as god. Whatever Cyrus accomplished, it was because Jehovah, sovereign Lord of all creation, permitted him to do it. Not only did Jehovah permit it, He assisted Cyrus in its accomplishment (cf. Jer. 27:1-11).

v. 5-8 ALMIGHTY: This is one of the great passages of the Bible teaching that God is immanent in His creation. God has not created the universe and wound it like a clock, only to go off somewhere and let it run itself. He is personally and directly involved in its day-by-day operation.

- a. In Christ, all things consist, or hold together, Col. 1:17
- b. He upholds all things by the word of His power, Heb. 1:3
- c. He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, Mt. 5:45
- d. He gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, Acts 14:17
- e. His wrath is revealed from heaven, Rom. 1:18-32, "in the things that have been made."
- f. In everything God works for good with those who love him, Rom. 8:28-29
- g. All that happens in history and nature is under the sovereign Throne of God and the Lamb (cf. Rev. 4-9).

If there is one thing made abundantly clear from the prophets (and confirmed by the New Testament) it is that God is sovereign of both weal and woe. Is God in the whirlwind? Yes! (Nahum 1:3; Zech. 9:14). Is God in the earthquake? Yes! (Isa. 29:6; Acts 16:26; Mt. 24:7; Rev. 6:12; 8:5, etc.). God is in locusts plagues, fires, floods, famines, droughts, plagues. "Does evil befall a city except the Lord hath done it?" (Amos 3:6). When some "good" comes everyone is agreed it is *directly* from the Lord. When some "woe" comes let us be equally assured it is from the Lord. Do tornadoes, earthquakes and famines mean those who are "victimized" are worse sinners than others? No! Jesus cleared that up in Luke 13. Whatever

happens, wherever it happens, it is God's message to a cursed and doomed universe to repent! All who do not repent will likewise perish! What of those who are repenting and yet perish? They "come out of their great tribulation" (Rev. 7:13-17); they are "rested from their labors" (Rev. 14:13); and their works follow after them. They are blessed! There is only one part of God's creation granted the sovereign exercise of free will—man! All the rest of His creation is under His *direct operation*. "Nature" is simply a word used by man to evade this fundamental issue that it is *God* who is Creator and *Sustainer*. But both good and evil, no matter with whom they originate, are never out of God's control. Even Satan's deliberate evil and the freely chosen evil deeds of men are under His control and are being used (and will be ultimately used) to serve His sovereign purposes and redound to His Absolute glory! Both the weal and woe of God is designed to lead man to repentance (cf. Rom. 1:18 with Rom. 2:4); see Isa. 14:24-27; 44:24-28; Jer. 27:1-11; Job 2:1-6; II Cor. 12:1-10; Dan. 2:20-23. Do men still rule by God's sovereign permission? Does God still send famines, earthquakes, fires, floods, whirlwinds, sun and rain, fruit and harvest season? Yes! He is the same God today He was thousands of years ago! Men still choose sin and evil rebellion because God has granted them the freedom to make that choice, and God is in no way to blame for their choice nor is He the author of their evil. But rest assured their evil will in no way triumph over the sovereign will of God. It is His will that their impenitent, unforgiven evil shall be punished forever—and so it will be! Furthermore, their evil in this life is permitted by Him and used as chastening, warning, perfecting, strengthening agents upon all who will put their trust in Him.

Verse eight appears to be Isaiah's own surrender to the expressed sovereignty of God just proclaimed. It is, as it were, a prayer of Isaiah looking forward to the prospective mission of Cyrus and its salvation for the people of God. Isaiah prays that God's whole universe join in with God's program of redemption for Israel and the nations. Let all of God's creation

bring forth and pour down spiritual blessings in heavenly gifts, according to the will and in the power of Jehovah, whose ultimate purpose is a new spiritual creation. Any man who believes and contemplates the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah as expressed by Isaiah here must be led to the same adoring prayer!

QUIZ

1. Why would God use the term *anointed* to refer to Cyrus?
2. Is it possible that Cyrus might have known about this prophecy?
3. How did Cyrus fulfill this prophecy?
4. To what extent does God exercise control over the universe today?
5. Is God the author of evil?

b. OBEDIENCE

TEXT: 45:9-13

- 9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?
- 10 Woe unto him that saith unto a father, What begettest thou? or to a woman, with what travailest thou?
- 11 Thus saith Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of the things that are to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.
- 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.
- 13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall

let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts.

QUERIES

- a. Who is God warning not to strive with his Maker?
- b. Why does God challenge, "ask me of the things that are to come"?

PARAPHRASE

Cursed is the man who contends with Me about what I have just predicted! Men are creatures, not Creators—they are like earthenware pots and have been formed. They are not Formers! Now, shall the clay (man) say to him that fashions it (God), What do you think you are doing—You can't do that!? For man to tell God He cannot do what He says He will do is as foolish as an unborn son telling his father and mother they cannot bring him forth in birth. This is what Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, Sovereign Creator says: Will you dare to question Me about what I intend to do in the future? Do you presume to tell Me what I can and cannot do with My covenant children? I am the Omnipotent Creator of everything that is! I created the earth and I created man; I created the heavens and all the heavenly beings, and everything that exists is at My command. As I predicted, because of My own righteous purpose, I raise up Cyrus and I will personally make all his ways successful. He will build My city, Jerusalem, and he will free My people from their captivity. He will not do it because he has been paid to do so; he will do it because the Lord Jehovah of hosts has spoken!

COMMENTS

v. 9-11 **PRESUMPTION:** God knows His former prophecy that Cyrus, a pagan emperor, is to be His anointed servant to deliver God's people, will meet with incredulity. It would not be easy for a Jew to accept the idea that a pagan monarch could be God's "anointed"! That Jehovah, God of Israel, would ever give success to a *goyim* (Gentile) was unacceptable (cf. Hab. 1:12—2:5; Lk. 4:16-30). But the rejection of God's word is moral rebellion and inexcusable. God has demonstrated in the past that He may do anything He wishes to do. He has demonstrated that when He speaks it comes to pass. Those who thus "contend" with Him are like *kheres* (earthenware pots) talking back to their *yatsar* (former) (cf. Isa. 29:16; Jer. 18:1ff; Rom. 9:20; Isa. 10:15). God pronounces *woe* on such presumption. It is insolent disobedience to question God's word as if to say, God, what do you think you are doing by anointing a Gentile—you can't do that! The phrase, "He hath no hands" implies the skeptic is charging God with ineptitude, as if God is going to make a mess of things by anointing Cyrus. Actually, it is the skeptic who is absurd. For a man to advise God is as ridiculous as an unborn child telling its parents they cannot conceive it or bring it to birth. The two verbs *shealvuni* (ask) and *tetsavvuni* (command) are imperatives. This may be translated as either command or question. We have chosen to understand it as a rhetorically satirical question from God to the skeptic. "You dare to question Me about My prophecies? You presume to command Me what to do about My redemptive program for My covenant people?" And all this presumptive meddling in God's pre-announced program is an attempted remonstrance with God about things that have not yet come to pass!

v. 12-13 **PROCLAMATION:** God reiterates His sovereignty. He is omnipotent and omniscient. He is so by right of His Creatorship. He made earth, man, heaven, angels and everything that exists. Everything that exists is at His command—even a Gentile emperor! But more significantly, Israel is His to

command. God's prophecy of deliverance by Cyrus is a command to Israel. Her proper response is obedience—not presumptive skepticism. What God is going to do with Cyrus is on account of God's righteousness—not Cyrus' goodness. The Lord plainly states that Cyrus shall be His servant to rebuild Jerusalem and to free the captive Jews. There were four decrees by Persian rulers authorizing the Jews to return, rebuild and reinstitute their commonwealth (see our comments in *Daniel*, College Press, pgs. 347-348). Cyrus made the first decree in 536 B.C. and it is recorded in Ezra 1:2-4. The astounding thing about this statement of Isaiah (v. 13) is that it was made approximately 150 years before the fact! This is proof positive of the supernatural character of the book of Isaiah! It is also of great significance that Isaiah predicts the motivation for Cyrus' freeing of the Jews and his part in rebuilding their nation will not be for "price nor reward." Cyrus will not have to be "paid off," or "bribed." The Jews will not be released for ransom. Zechariah's prophecy reveals that God will keep the world at peace so the Jews may rebuild their temple and their cities—"not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," (cf. Zech. 4:5-14). It is nothing short of amazing that a powerful emperor like Cyrus would free his captives without a struggle and by his own imperial edict. It would be totally unexpected behavior in a world ruler of those days. To allow some 100,000 people, who in 70 years had become an integral part of the economic, political and social system of the empire, to pick up and leave suddenly would cause unimaginable problems. But as uncommon and unimaginable as it may have seemed then, it happened—just as it was predicted. God "stirred up the spirit" of Cyrus and the Jews were returned to Palestine. No great army overpowered Persia; no exchange of money took place; there was not even a "summit meeting" of diplomats working out a release of the captives. Only the amazing power of the fulfillment of the Word of God being demonstrated!

Note the following things about the return from the captivity:

- a. It was begun in 536 B.C., exactly 70 years after the first captivity of Judah in 606 B.C. This exact 70 years was predicted by God's prophets (cf. Jer. 25:11-12; Dan. 9:2)!
- b. It was instituted by Cyrus, emperor of Persia; He was predicted to be the instigator of the return 150 years before he was born, (Isa. 45:1-13)!
- c. The release of the Jews from Persia would in no way profit the emperor Cyrus. There would be no "pay-off." As a matter of fact, Cyrus decreed that people of his realm should contribute to the financial needs of the Jews to help them rebuild their nation (cf. Ezra 1:1-4)!
- d. Not only were the Jews released from captivity, they were charged by the Persian emperor to reinstitute their commonwealth. This meant they were to return to self-governing nationhood (cf. Ezra 7:11-26)!

When Isaiah was making this prophecy of the release of the exiles by the hand of Cyrus, the people of Judah had not yet been taken captive! In fact, their captivity was yet some 50 years away! The point is that Isaiah's people are refusing to believe they are going away into captivity. How much more incredible to believe they will someday be released and returned to their land by an unborn, uncrowned emperor of an unformed empire. One only has to read the book of Jeremiah (esp. Jer. 27-28) to understand the stubborn incredulity of the people of Judah about their subjugation to Babylon. The prediction of the prophets that God's covenant people would be taken into exile was almost totally unacceptable to the populace. The prophets who told God's truth were considered traitors!

Mankind, on the whole, changes little in its attitude toward God's promises that the kingdoms of this world are doomed. Few believed Jesus when He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem—not even the disciples (cf. Mt. 23:37—24:28); not many believed the predictions of John the apostle that Rome would fall (cf. Rev. 6-20; esp. ch. 17-18); and there will continue to be "scoffers, following their own passions and saying,

'Where is the promise of his coming?' . . ." (cf. II Pet. 3:1-13). But the word of the Lord is sure! The return of the Jews by Cyrus proves it! Let us heed Isaiah, "Will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the work of my hands?" (Isa. 45:11). God will do as He has said, and no one (not even Cyrus) will deter Him! God has spoken! Man's only intelligent, hopeful response is obedience. Even when God's declarations are prophetic and, as yet, non-existent man must *believe and act* accordingly!

QUIZ

1. Why the emphasis on the sovereignty of God's predictive word here?
2. How are the scoffers characterized in this passage?
3. When did Cyrus let Israel return to its homeland?
4. Why is the return of the Jews so amazing? (name four features).
5. How is God's prophecy of deliverance by Cyrus a command to the Jews?
6. Is there a lesson to be learned today from this prediction of the return?

c. ORDER

TEXT: 45:14-19

- 14 Thus saith Jehovah, The labor of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall go 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.
- 15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel,

the Saviour.

- 16 They shall be put to shame, yea, confounded, all of them; they shall go into confusion together that are makers of idols.
- 17 But Israel shall be saved by Jehovah with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be put to shame nor confounded world without end.
- 18 For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, the God that formed the earth and made it, that established it and created it not a waste, that formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah; and there is none else.
- 19 I have not spoken in secret, in a place of the land of darkness; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I, Jehovah, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

QUERIES

- a. How would the wealth of the Egyptians come to the Jews?
- b. Why say God "hides" himself?
- c. What is the point of reminding of Jehovah's creative power?

PARAPHRASE

As a result of what I am going to do with Cyrus, says the Lord, Israel will eventually inherit the wealth of those who once opposed her, like Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sabeans. That wealth will be the best of mankind putting itself in willing servitude to follow the leadership of Israel. Men from all over the world will bow down and confess that the True God is in this new Israel, beseeching her, Let us join you for we believe there is no God except your God. Of a truth, O God of Israel, you are a Saviour who works mysteriously and incomprehensibly to the finite mind of man. At that time, the great contrast between the futility of worshipping idols and the complete and

eternal salvation Jehovah gives will be made manifest. The idol worshippers will be shown to be confused and the worshippers of Jehovah will never be confused. This is what Jehovah, the One who does everything for a purpose, says. Jehovah is the God of Order and Design. Everything He does has as its goal the exaltation of His name and the salvation of man—even the captivity and return of His children. He is Creator, and there is no other! He is Sovereign, and there is no other! All of this concerning His sovereignty and His purposefulness He has made known by revelation. He has even revealed His intention to redeem mankind. He has not, like the false gods, made Himself inaccessible or unknowable. I have never said to Israel, You may look for Me but I will not let you find Me. I am Jehovah, and I speak the truth openly; whatever I say is right, and it will come to pass!

COMMENTS

v. 14 CONVERSION: What is predicted in this verse will come as a consequence of what has been said about believing and obeying the promise of deliverance from the captivity through Cryus. God is going to form a *new* Israel by the process of judgment (captivity) and redemption (return). He is going to prepare a remnant of faithful believers through which He may bring the Messiah and redeem the whole world. This messianic advent is not going to occur immediately after the return from captivity. There is no necessity to force the passage to say that. But the release of the captives and the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth will be the beginning of that total process which culminates in the first coming of Christ (cf. our comments, *Daniel*, College Press, 9:24-27, pgs. 343-356). The figurative picture of many nations coming to Israel with their treasures is a favorite expression of Isaiah to predict the messianic age (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 18:7; 19:16-25; 23:18; 60:5-22; 61:5-11, etc.). It would demand too much to force this passage to a literal meaning. We have here a prediction that the

inveterate enemies of Israel will, as a result of Israel's return to her homeland, *willingly* turn over to Israel their wealth, *willingly* surrender to Israel "in chains," and *willingly* beseech Israel to be allowed to join in the worship of Israel's God. Such action has certainly never occurred by political or military persuasion. It could only be the result of conversion. Isaiah is predicting that the "new" Israel, resulting from the restored and repenting messianic remnant, will one day see the "wealth" of its enemies willingly surrendered to it. This "new" Israel will also see men of all nations, Gentiles, becoming bond-servants to Jehovah and His kingdom. Gentiles will one day recognize that there is only One true God, and He is Jehovah, and they will beg to be joined to His people. Cyrus' release of the exiles will serve this purpose. Isaiah does not tell us all the events of history that will transpire between Cyrus and the conversion of the Gentiles to the "new" Israel. That is not relevant here. The point of Isaiah's message here is that Jehovah is sovereign—He is supreme. Jehovah is a God of purpose and order, the prophet affirms and Jehovah's ultimate purpose is the redemption, not just of a 100,000 exiles from Mesopotamia, but of the whole world.

v. 15-17 CERTITUDE: Isaiah now moves to an expression of awe and praise for the unsearchableness of God's ways. The Hebrew word *misettatter* is translated "hidest thyself," and is similar to the Greek word *musterion* ("mystery") which means simply, *unknown*, or *unrevealed*. God is knowable when He reveals Himself. But there are depths to the character and mind of God that finite man could never know even if they were revealed to him. Man, living in a physical, time-space, temporal capsule is incapable of comprehending a non-physical, non-time-space, non-temporary existence. God reveals as much of Himself as man needs and is able to assimilate for the purpose of redemption and salvation and sanctification. Beyond that man is at a loss to know, not because God is unwilling, but because man is incapable (cf. Isa. 55:6-11; John 16:12; Rom. 11:33; I Cor. 2:6-13). God's predictions that He will work through a pagan ruler (Cyrus) to

return the exiles and that from this will come a "new" Israel which will incorporate "slaves" who have willingly surrendered from Egypt, Ethiopia, etc., is "unsearchable" and "inscrutable." God works in His plan of redemption according to His sovereign will (this is the message of Romans 9-11). Man may understand enough of God's nature to know He is sovereign. But what man needs more than understanding is belief and obedience.

Incomprehensible as it may seem, the work of God through the *new* Israel, begun with the return of the exiles by Cyrus, will result in a great demonstration of the futility of idolatry. It seems altogether incongruous that a great pagan emperor who worships idols would begin a work that would ultimately expose the shamefulness of idolatry, but that is the meaning of verse 16. In contrast with the chaos and hopelessness of idolatry, the *new* Israel will know the orderliness and salvation of the One True God. The Israel of God will *never* know shame or confusion—her salvation and hope will outlast time. The Israel of Isaiah's day was to put its hope in this as a certitude because Jehovah is the God of order and purpose. His ways are not reducible to human reasoning or human experience, but He has revealed His nature sufficiently that human beings may trust Him completely to have their redemption and glorification as His purpose in everything He does and says. Faith in the certitude of God's purpose would be the only thing that would sustain Isaiah's people through Babylonian captivity and the long centuries of "indignation" until the coming of the Messiah.

v. 18-19 COHERENCE: Isaiah continues the theme of purposefulness. God made the world for order and purpose. He did not intend it to be perverted and turned into chaos by rebellion and sin. But man made "waste" of God's creation when he believed Satan and disobeyed God. This is Isaiah's message in verse 18. The implication is that God will, through the work begun by Cyrus and the returned exiles, proceed to restore order and purpose to His creation. Restoration of *order* is the message of Romans 1-8; it is the message of Hebrews 2:5-18.

Man once had dominion over an ordered, purposeful, paradise; he forfeited it by sin and his paradise became a "futility" (cf. Rom. 8:20); Christ's meritorious work paid the redemptive price for man and his planet and one day this redemption will be consummated (Heb. 2:5-18), and man redeemed by covenant relationship to his Maker will once again have dominion over Paradise. This is the ultimate purpose of Jehovah and the goal of the work of Cyrus and the returned exiles! The coherent reunion of man with his Maker and man with his surroundings is the goal of God. Man in oneness with his God and with his fellow man is what Jesus fervently prayed for and died for (cf. Jn. 17:1ff). Only God could accomplish that. And He would accomplish it through things unsearchable and inscrutable to the wisdom of men—the gospel of the cross (cf. I Cor. 1:10-31). All the philosophies and political schemes of men put together will never accomplish what God can do through the "foolishness" of the message of the cross of Christ—that is, reunite man in a divine coherence with his Maker!

Although the ways and means by which God does this may not be fully understood, the fact that He is going to do it is no secret! This is what the prophet says in verse 19. Jehovah makes every possible effort to reveal Himself. He wants men to trust Him and love Him and obey Him. He is not like the pagan gods and their devotees whose one aim seems to be to conceal. Those who worshiped idols and practiced sorcery found themselves being told their gods could only be discovered by secret rituals and then only a select few could know the rituals. Most Gentiles understood clearly that their gods were simply creatures of mythology and fantasy. Most were skeptical of any reality connected with religion. Jehovah is not like that! When He speaks He speaks truth. When He acts, what He does is right and real. He spoke in revelation to man. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets . . ." (Heb. 1:1). There was no dearth of communication from Jehovah, both in word and deed, even to the day of Isaiah. He declared His purposefulness and faithfulness over and over. Now, Isaiah is calling upon his contemporaries

to believe Jehovah is speaking again, openly, plainly and purposefully.

QUIZ

1. What connection does this text have with what has been said before about Cyrus and the exiles?
2. Why is the statement about the "labor of Egypt" etc. to be understood figuratively?
3. How may God "hide" Himself and "reveal" Himself at the same time?
4. How will Cyrus' work result in demonstrating the futility of idolatry?
5. What kind of coherence does God seek in His creation?
6. How will God bring about that coherence?

d. OUTREACH

TEXT: 45:20-25

- 20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that carry the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.
- 21 Declare ye, and bring it forth; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath showed this from ancient time? who hath declared it of old? have not I, Jehovah? and there is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none besides me.
- 22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.
- 23 By myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.
- 24 Only in Jehovah, it is said of me, is righteousness and

strength; even to him shall men come; and all they that were incensed against him shall be put to shame.

25 In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

QUERIES

- a. Why direct the "escaped of the nations" to gather?
- b. When shall every "knee bow," etc.?
- c. Who is "incensed" against Jehovah?

PARAPHRASE

When this work, begun by Cyrus, resulting in a new Israel shall have culminated, all you Gentiles who wish to escape the judgment of Jehovah gather yourselves together and draw near. Those who worship idols are ignorant and lost; they pray to gods that are unable to save. Let all idol-worshippers who wish to contest My sovereignty combine all their wisdom and power and try to keep My predictions from coming to pass! After all, who has made such prophecies and had them come to pass— one of your idol-gods? No! Only Jehovah knows the future with certainty. I am the Only God there is! I am absolutely just and faithful to keep My word and I am the only Saviour there is; Let all the world turn to Me and be saved, for I am the only God there is; there is no other Savior! Since I am the only Absolute, I have sworn by My absolute sovereignty. I have spoken in these prophecies on the basis of My absolute faithfulness; they will come to pass! Indeed, every human being will ultimately acknowledge My sovereignty; every knee will bow and every tongue will confess some day that I am Lord. Some, who say, Only in Jehovah may we have real righteousness and strength, will come to Me and be saved. Those who continue to hate Jehovah will eventually acknowledge His sovereignty, but in disgrace. Through Jehovah's grace and power

all the spiritual offspring of true Israel will be vindicated and justified because they have put their trust in Him, and Jehovah will give them of His glory.

COMMENTS

v. 20-21 INDICTMENT: These verses continue and amplify the train of thought that has gone before concerning the long-range, culminating result of Jehovah's redemptive work begun with Cyrus' freeing of the Jewish exiles. This redemptive work of God will have a world-wide outreach. All those Gentiles who repent of their idolatry and acknowledge, in faith, the sovereignty of Jehovah will be saved. The Hebrew word *hikavetzu*, translated "assemble yourselves," is stronger than merely "assemble." It means "form yourselves into a specific group." Those that are "escaped" among the *goiyim* (Gentiles) are the future people from all nations who will have seen the culmination of the work begun in the return from the captivities (the institution of the messianic kingdom through Jesus Christ), recognize the sovereignty of the God of Israel, wish to escape His judgment and choose to accept His offer of salvation. In other words, it is the church of the New Testament. Isaiah is affirming (in predictive-present) that a specific group of *goiyim* will thus choose to escape the judgment upon all religions except that of Jehovah which will be made apparent to honest-minded believers through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12) and this will be confirmed and affirmed centuries after Isaiah predicts it here. Many of the Gentiles would, when the new Israel (the church) began to proclaim its gospel, acknowledge the futility of their pagan religions and their own lostness (cf. Acts 19:11-20). The indictment of Jehovah is that idols cannot save and those who worship them are without knowledge of the truth.

Many of the *goiyim* would challenge that last statement! Even some of the Jews of Isaiah's day would find it objectionable.

Through the centuries from Isaiah until Christ, the whole Gentile world remained in ignorance and superstition and idolatry. Even after the resurrection of Christ men continued to cling to their idols and human philosophies (cf. Acts 17:16-33). Hundreds of millions of people today worship gods of wood and stone that cannot save them. But the sovereignty of God is demonstrated, as verse 21 states, through the fulfillment of God's prophetic word (cf. II Pet. 1:16-21). Jehovah offers the *goiyim* an opportunity to "state their case" and even invites them to pool their "counsel" and see if they can gainsay the predictions of Jehovah through His prophets. Jehovah alone knows the future and He has demonstrated it from the beginning of time by predicting events great and small in minute detail, thousands of years before their fulfillment. Much of this was prior to Isaiah's time! There was plenty of evidence even in Isaiah's day that Jehovah's word always came to pass. Isaiah himself was able to believe in the Christ as the culminating work of Jehovah (cf. Jn. 12:36-43); Abraham saw the day of Christ by faith and rejoiced (Jn. 8:56-59). But most certainly, when the prophecies Jehovah made by Isaiah gained their fulfillment, the Gentiles would have every possible proof that Jehovah is God and there is no other!

v. 22-25 INVITATION: The Hebrew word *peneu* means *turn*, thus v. 22 should read, "Turn unto me, and be ye saved." There are two other Hebrew words also used to mean turn—*shuv* and *nacham*. *Peneu* means more literally, "turn to or towards; follow; turn to face something or someone." *Peneu* is the imperative of *panah*, so it is Jehovah's command that all the world turn to Him for salvation. The word translated "be ye saved" is *heuashe'u*, the imperative of *yasha'*, and so the Lord is here expressing His deep desire that all men be saved (I Tim. 2:3; II Pet. 3:9). It is really Jehovah's tender insistence that all the world face up to the fact that He is the only God and Savior of mankind there is! Isaiah is truly the spokesman of the Old Testament for the universality of the gospel. God's outreach is to the ends of the earth. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save (cf. Isa. 59:1-3), it is man's sin

(rebellion) that keeps him from being saved. In other words, man's salvation is complete and readily available but in the final analysis, it is up to man. He must choose. He must accept the covenant terms.

The salvation of all mankind. is of great significance. It is what all of history functions for; it is that for which God has stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to return the exiles. Man's redemption and regeneration is that for which God longs, plans, works and sacrifices (even His own Son). It is His total goal. So He supports His invitation to all the world with an oath. He swears by Himself. There is nothing greater to swear by (cf. Heb. 6:13-20) He swears on His eternality (cf. Gen. 22:16; Rom. 14:11). The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ was the greatest, most specific and thoroughly confirmed oath of God ever made. It was there, in history, God validated the certainty of all His promises and the faithfulness of His own nature (cf. II Cor. 1:19-21; Heb. 6:17f) when He "interposed" *Himself* with an oath. God, in the flesh, dying and coming to life again by His own power! Once and for all God proved through the empty tomb that He is the resurrection and the life. He proved that no one comes to the Father but by Jesus Christ. With absolute historic certainty God proved there that every word of His comes to pass in righteousness. He also proved that eventually every knee must bow and every tongue confess that He is God (cf. Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10f.). While time lasts, men are free to acknowledge His sovereignty or deny it. But when time ceases to be and men inhabit the eternal destinies they have freely chosen, they will all acknowledge His sovereignty. Eventually every thing created must acknowledge His Lordship. Some, as verse 24 points out, will confess His righteousness and strength and come to Him (for salvation). Others, incensed, hateful and rebellious to the end will know and acknowledge His sovereignty but will be "put to shame."

Jehovah will justify (vindicate) all the seed of Israel and glorify them. In our context (the work of God, begun with Cyrus, culminating in redemption for the whole world) this "seed" must refer to the spiritual Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29;

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4:13-25; Gal. 3:6-9; 3:27-29; 6:14-16). All, both Jew and Gentile, who "turn" to Jehovah for salvation by faith will have that faith vindicated when God, "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10), finishes His work at the consummation of it all. Right now we are being changed, by faith, from one degree of glory to another (II Cor. 3:18). One day, when time ceases to be, we shall have all the glory our Great God has prepared for us—then our faith will be vindicated! God is sovereign in salvation!

QUIZ

1. What is the nature of the "assembly" the nations are to make?
2. Who are the "escaped"?
3. What is God's challenge to the Gentiles who will not accept His sovereignty?
4. How insistent is God that the whole world "look" to Him for salvation?
5. What demonstration do we have that God's good news was universally intended?
6. What was God's greatest "oath" to the world of His faithfulness to keep His promises?
7. Who are the "seed" of Israel?

SPECIAL STUDY

TYPOLOGY

Definition: From *typos* meaning literally "to strike"; "the mark or impression of something; stamp; impressed sign; emblem." Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 10:6, 11; Jn. 20:25 "Print" of nail (lit. usage) Webster: "A figure or representation of something to come; a token; a sign; a symbol; correlative to antitype."