

Isaiah Chapter 44

Chapter 44:1-28

Contains one of the most amazing prophecies in all of Scripture.

In verse 28, Cyrus, the king of Persia, is named as the coming deliverer of the Jews more than 140 years in advance.

The structure of the poem (in verses 24-28), is arranged deliberately to end with a definite climax, which introduces Cyrus by name.

A similar prediction can be found (in 1 Kings 13:2), where Josiah is named three hundred years ahead of his time.

As the passage opens, "Israel" is again identified as "my servant," who has been chosen from the womb to fulfill God's purposes.

In verse 6, the prophet emphasizes the oneness of God by stating that "besides me there is no God".

Yet, at the same time, the prophet distinguishes between "the LORD the King of Israel" and "his redeemer the Lord of hosts."

The personal name, Yahweh, is used of "both" the "King" and His Redeemer, the one referring to God the Father and the other to God the Son.

Verses 1-2

"My servant ... whom I have chosen ... made thee ... formed thee":

God has chosen His servant Israel to be His own eternally (43:1, 21, 25), and they need not fear abandonment.

Isaiah 44:1 "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:"

In the last chapter, we had seen an Israelite who had displeased God.

The word "yet" lets us know that even though they had sinned, there is hope.

"Yet" changes the pace of this chapter.

It is as if Isaiah is saying, "Don't" stop listening now; Now comes the best part".

When Israel is called Jacob, it is speaking of the family more than as a nation.

It is a personal name.

Notice also, that Jacob had never stopped being God's servant.

They had been disobedient, but it had not taken away their relationship to God.

There are two Israels.

Spiritual Israel are the children who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Physical Israel is made up of the physical descendants of Jacob.

Isaiah 44:2 "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."

“Jesurun”:

An honored name for Israel whose root meaning is “upright” or “straight,” in contrast to the root of “Jacob”, which means “over-reacher” or deceiver (Deut. 32:15).

Both Israels are a chosen people.

The physical house of Israel had been chosen of God to receive His law.

The spiritual house of Israel was chosen to receive the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Verse 2 is a reminder that all belong to the Creator.

He made us, and we belong to Him.

The word "Jesurun" is another name for God's people.

It speaks of their character.

"Jesurun" means upright.

It is a symbolic name for Israel.

They may not be upright in the sight of the world, but they are upright in God's sight.

God's people take on the character of God, when they are saved.

The name implies those who have taken on the righteousness of Christ.

Isaiah 44:3 "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:"

“Water ... floods”:

The extensive blessing of physical conditions will favor the nation in the coming kingdom age (43:19-20); they were also symbolic of spiritual refreshment from the Holy Spirit and God Himself (32:15; Joel 2:28-29).

The “water”, and the “floods”, in the verse above, are two entirely different things.

Water, many times, is speaking of the Word of God.

Look, with me, in the following verses at just that.

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

John 4:13-14 "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:" "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

The water can symbolize the Word or the Spirit, and really, they are one and the same.

Notice (in verse 3 above), that only those who are thirsty receive this water.

This is like salvation.

It comes to just those who will accept it.

This whole Scripture has to be speaking of the appearing of Jesus Christ to the seed of Abraham.

The believers are His offspring.

Galatians 3:29 "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Isaiah 44:4 "And they shall spring up [as] among the grass, as willows by the water courses."

This is just speaking of the abundance of their growth near the water.

The willows usually grow near water.

It is a natural thing for growth to appear where there is abundant water (Word).

Isaiah 44:5 "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."

“The LORD’S ... name of Jacob ... name of Israel”:

In the future golden age of Israel, belonging to the LORD and belonging to God’s chosen people will be synonymous, and it will be a badge of honor gladly worn without fear.

Jesus opened the wall of partition for all to come to God.

Christianity is open to all who will believe.

The natural Jew is not excluded, but neither is the Gentile.

We all are the LORD's, if we believe.

Since Jesus Christ came to the earth, worship of God was opened to the heathen man.

Isaiah 44:6 "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."

“King ... redeemer ... LORD of hosts ... first ... last”:

The LORD identified Himself as Israel’s King (43:15), Redeemer (43:14), and Eternal One (41:4; 48:12).

Jesus, in a direct affirmation of His deity, called Himself the First and the Last (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13).

“Beside me there is no God”:

God’s exclusive claim to deity; prepared the way for another challenge to false gods (in verses 7-20; 43:10).

We see the Redeemer.

This is speaking of Jesus Christ who is the King.

He is the Eternal One, He is Lord of hosts.

Lord, in this, is speaking of the same One as in 1 John:

1 John 5:7 "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

In Jesus, all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.

Colossians 2:9 "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Jesus represented Himself, the Father, and the Holy Ghost on the earth.

They all planned the redemption of man through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

They were in total agreement.

Jesus followed completely the will of all of them.

LORD, many times, indicates ownership.

We are His property.

We have been bought by the precious blood of Jesus.

I AM is speaking of the eternity of God in the present tense.

Whether you lived 4,000 years ago or whether you are living right now, God is your "I AM GOD".

Isaiah 44:7 "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 show unto them."

"Let them show unto them":

If idols can foretell "the things that are coming," let them predict accurately, as the Lord has.

Since the Jews have had predictions of the future ever since God chose them as His people, they are qualified to be His witnesses (verse 8).

There is no other god that is capable of doing this.

The gods they had worshipped in Babylon were sometimes people who had been elevated to godhood.

They were not the real God, and could not create people, or a world for those people to live in.

They were like the idols, nothings.

There is no comparison between the LORD and false gods.

Isaiah 44:8 "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]."

The first of the 10 Commandments tell us this.

Exodus 20:3 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Isaiah is trying to express over and over that there is but One God.

God can manifest Himself in a burning bush, or in smoke, or fire, but it is One Spirit.

God is a Spirit.

John 4:24 "God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth."

Verses 9-20: This exposé of idolatry is the most taunting in all of the bible. The prophet Isaiah, serving as the spokesman of Yahweh, revealed the utter foolishness of polytheistic pagan idolatry.

The "graven image" (carved idol) is called "vanity" (nothing).

"Delectable things" refers to the adornment of idols with gold, silver, and precious stones.

The prophet announces that the idols themselves are "their own witnesses."

They "see not, nor know."

Therefore, these inanimate objects are "profitable for nothing."

Isaiah then berates the "workmen" (artisans), for designing and constructing their idols in the "figure of a man".

He exposes the basic fallacy of idolatry, a god made in the image of man.

Thus, the prophet's criticism of one who would worship an idol carved from the same tree that he would use for firewood is that "he feedeth on ashes."

Verses 9-11

Ashamed ... ashamed ... ashamed":

The workmen who manufactured idols were mere men and could make nothing as good or greater than man.

They and others who put their trust in idols had simple reason to fear and be ashamed of such folly (verse 11).

Isaiah 44:9 "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."

A graven image is a creation of man.

The best rule we can go by is to worship the Creator of all the world and everything in it.

We must not worship anything, or anyone, that has been created.

Even the creator of a graven image, is a creation himself.

This makes it twice as bad.

These idols may be pretty to look at with fleshly eyes, but they have no value.

They are nothings.

This is a lesson in futility.

If you can see it with physical eyes, do not worship it.

The problem with people who worship material things is that a spiritual blindness has overcome them.

A very good example of a false god that was made by man is the golden calf.

The worship of idols is spiritual adultery.

God will not tolerate this type of behavior.

Exodus 34:14 "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name [is] Jealous, [is] a jealous God:"

Isaiah 44:10 "Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image [that] is profitable for nothing?"

This is about the worst thing a person can do to God.

This is total unfaithfulness.

They have no value at all.

Isaiah 44:11 "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."

It would not really matter how many people were gathered together to worship this false god.

At the appearance of the True God, they would all tremble and be afraid.

When Aaron graven the golden calf for the children of Israel to worship on the way to the Promised Land, he was so ashamed, he denied it.

He pretended the people made him graven it.

Fear of the LORD changes our thoughts.

No one wants to admit they made an idol, when they find the truth.

Verses 12-19

Human workers expended all their energy to produce a beautiful idol, but the best they could make was the likeness of a man (Deut. 4:15-18; Romans 1:23), and that could not renew their strength.

Yet they who wait on the Lord will renew their strength (40:28-31).

The same humanly nurtured trees used as fuel for fires to furnish warmth and to cook also provides wood for people to make idols, which they worship and to which they entrust their prayers and themselves.

Nothing could be more foolish than worshiping a piece of wood as deity, while burning the same wood in a fire to keep warm.

Idol-makers cannot comprehend the idiocy of creating gods from materials used for the most trivial domestic purposes.

Isaiah 44:12 "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."

We see from this, that this was no easy task to make the idol.

Sometimes these people make the image to get money to feed their families.

It is still sin, regardless of why they made it.

Isaiah 44:13 "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."

This just tells of the careful way in which it is made to make it beautiful to the eye, and acceptable to keep in the home.

Isaiah 44:14 "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]."

Even the tree that he cuts down to make the image from, comes from God.

God provided the trees and even caused them to grow when it rains.

They are a gift to man from God, and should not be used to make idols.

Isaiah 44:15 "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 worshipeth [it]; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto."

The purpose of a tree is for making a house to live in, and to burn to keep warm.

God did not provide the tree, so that you can use it to make a false god.

Isaiah 44:16 "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:"

It is a good and useful purpose of the tree to be used for fire to cook our food, and to warm our houses.

The goodness that God has provided for man's comfort here on the earth should be used for just that.

It should not be made into a god that would cause God to be angry.

It belongs to God.

We should never use it for anything not pleasing to Him.

Isaiah 44:17 "And the residue thereof he maketh a god, [even] his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshipeth [it], and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou [art] my god."

This is the height of foolishness to make a god of something you can see, or hold in your hand.

They did not even stop to think where the tree came from.

This is as foolish as man can get.

God will not permit this folly.

Isaiah 44:18 "They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; [and] their hearts, that they cannot understand."

God must open our spiritual eyes, that we might see, and our ears of understanding, before we can know.

He is angry with these idolaters and allows them to continue in spiritual blindness and deafness.

I have said many times in these lessons; I believe that is what is wrong with most who proclaim to believe in Jesus today.

They are looking with physical eyes at the Bible, and do not really understand God.

My Bible says God is a Spirit.

Since God authored the Bible, the only way to understand is through the Spirit.

Isaiah 44:19 "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?"

This just shows the height of misunderstanding.

Notice, the heart is where the understanding is, and not in the eyes.

Isaiah 44:20 "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?"

“Deceived heart ... lie”:

Like eating ashes, which provide no nourishment, idolatry is a deception, from which the sinner gets nothing but judgment (Prov. 15:14; Hosea 12:1).

An idol is like ashes.

It has no permanence.

Man's heart is desperately wicked, before he receives the Lord Jesus.

The soul of man has to do with the will of man.

The right hand symbolizes the spirit of man.

This is saying the heart is deceived and wicked, and even the spirit of man is ruined by it.

A man is what his heart is.

Verses 21-28

The prophet turns his attention again to “Israel” to remind them that God has “blotted out” their transgressions and “redeemed” them, and urges them to “return unto me” (i.e. repent).

“I am the Lord” stands at the beginning of the final section of this poem and is the subject of all that follows.

Nine times in this section the English word “that” is used to identify the activity of the Lord.

The passage follows in perfect poetic rhythm, leading up to the identification of Cyrus by name.

Thus, it is announced that “Jerusalem ... shalt be inhabited” and that the “cities of Judah ... shall be built”.

God will raise up a deliverer of His own to accomplish this astounding deed: “Cyrus”.

Since this is Cyrus II (554-529 B.C.), his name Cyrus was probably an early dynastic throne name.

In Persian history, he is known as Cyrus the Great.

(In 539 B.C.), he conquered Babylon and decreed the return of the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and the “foundation” of the “temple” (Ezra 1:2).

The discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder (dating from 536 B.C.), further verifies the biblical account.

Isaiah 44:21 "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."

God has saved a remnant of His people through all of their sin.

They sin; God forgives them, and blesses them, until they fall back into sin again.

God will not give up on Israel.

They are His, and He will deliver them.

Isaiah 44:22 "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."

“Blotted out ... thy sins”:

Further reassurances of God’s sovereign grace at work on behalf of Israel were given (43:25).

God had blotted out their sins written in His book against them.

As a person can’t see what is ahead because it is blocked by a “thick cloud,” so God obliterated the sins of those He redeemed.

“Return unto me”:

God has already provided for redemption, even before the cross, but based on it alone.

For those who turn from sin and return to Him, there is redemption, because the purchase price for the sinner was paid by the sacrifice of Christ.

The Lord calls on His people to repent so they may receive the promised redemption.

This is an interesting statement, especially since the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement were covered over, not blotted out.

Jesus blotted out the sins with His precious blood.

The blood of an animal cannot do away with sin.

Notice in the verse above, "thy sins" have been removed as a cloud rolls away and is no more.

Notice, it is of our own free will that we come to Him.

Redemption is for all men.

Not all men receive redemption, because God will not overrule our will.

Redemption is available to us, but we must want it to receive it.

Isaiah 44:23 "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."

“Heavens ... every tree ... redeemed Jacob”:

The national redemption of Israel at Christ’s second coming entails also the redemption of all nature (Romans 8:19-20), so the prophet calls on the whole creation to rejoice.

It is not the works of man that has won the victory.

It is the LORD of glory.

Not only are the people blessed with the salvation provided to us by the LORD, but even the elements of the earth.

All of heaven rejoices when one sinner is saved.

We know that the heavens themselves will not be darkened, but will be alive with life when the salvation of mankind comes.

The animals and the birds are happy that there is a state of peace prevailing.

Isaiah 44:24 "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;"

The Word of God is Creator God.

The Redeemer of all mankind is Jesus (Word).

God formed man from the dust of the earth.

To fully get the impact of all this creation, read again the first chapter of Genesis.

God did it all.

Not anything was made except by the Word of God.

God spoke the universe into existence for the use of man.

Then He made man to inhabit it.

He needed no help.

He did it all.

We do not need to figure out how He did it, just accept the fact that He did, by faith.

Isaiah 44:25 "That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise [men] backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;"

“Liars ... diviners”:

False prophets must suffer the consequences of their deceptive counsel.

The knowledge of man is but foolishness to God.

Isaiah 44:26 "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:"

“His servant ... his messengers”:

In contrast with His breaking the word of false prophets (verse 25), the LORD confirmed the word of His true prophets such as of Isaiah (Zech. 1:6).

Most specially, God confirmed the Word of the Messiah, who is the consummate embodiment of all the prophets and messengers of God (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 21:34, 36-37).

“Raise up the decayed places”:

The fall of Jerusalem came (in 586 B.C.), when the Babylonians invaded the Land.

God promised to restore the Land to prosperity, the foretaste of restoration coming after 70 years with the help of the Persians (41:2).

But the greater restoration was to come in the Messiah’s kingdom.

All of God's promises come to pass.

He is not a man that He should lie.

God is absolute Truth.

His messages, many times, come from the prophets and preachers acting as His ambassadors.

They may be simple men, but when they speak on behalf of God, it is absolute truth.

God promises in this verse to restore Jerusalem, and He will do it.

He will restore the people, as well.

Isaiah 44:27 "That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:"

“Be dry”:

The LORD demonstrated His power by drying up the Red sea and the Jordan River when delivering His people from Egypt (43:2).

God is in command of this earth, as well as the heavens, and beneath the earth.

Whatever He commands to happen happens, even if a river must go dry.

Isaiah 44:28 "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 ... my shepherd”:

The prophecy, given a century and a half before Cyrus lived and because the king of Persia predicted God’s use of the Persian king to gather the faithful remnant of Israel back to the Land.

In this role, Cyrus prefigured the LORD’s Servant, who will shepherd the sheep of Israel in their final regathering (Micah 5:4).

The title “shepherd” applied to kings as leaders of God’s people (2 Sam. 5:2; Jer. 3:15).

Paul compares David to the standard of Cyrus’ obedience (in (Acts 13:22).

“Jerusalem ... the temple”:

(In 538 B.C.), Cyrus decreed the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1:1-2; 6:3), thus fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy.

The returning Jews completed the work (in 516 B.C.; Ezra 6:15).

Cyrus will rule, because God put him in as ruler.

It is not difficult for God to call Cyrus by name well before he lives.

God has foreknowledge.

He even knew what you and I would be named before the foundation of the earth.

Why God chose Cyrus is none of our business.

Of course, this is the rebuilding after their captivity in Babylon.

I believe this also points to the time when Jesus will establish Jerusalem as God’s city again.

Isaiah Chapter 44 Questions

1. What does the word "yet" tell is in verse 1?
2. What is intended when Israel is called Jacob?
3. What are the two Israels?
4. What had physical Israel been chosen for?
5. What does spiritual Israel receive from being chosen of God?
6. What does "Jesurun" mean?
7. The name implies what?
8. Water, many times, is speaking of what?
9. What else can the water symbolize, besides the Word?
10. Who receives the water?
11. Why do willows grow best near water courses?
12. When did Christianity become available to the heathen?
13. What are the names of God in verse 6?
14. What does the name of God "I AM" tell us about Him?
15. What was a little different about the false gods of Babylon?
16. What is the first of the 10 Commandments?
17. A graven image is a creation of _____.
18. What was God's purpose for a tree?
19. Why did they not understand, and not do this?
20. Understanding is in the _____, not in the eyes.
21. Why is blotted out sin an interesting statement in verse 22?
22. Redemption is for _____ men.
23. What are the animals and birds pleased about?
24. Where should you read to get the full impact of creation?

25. Who is in command of all the elements of the earth?
26. Why will Cyrus rule?