

The Redeemer

Isaiah 44

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**BIG BEND
BIBLE
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Isaiah 44:1-5 – A promise to pour out the Spirit (NIV)

“But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. ²This is what the Lord says— he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. ³For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. ⁴They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. ⁵Some will say, ‘I belong to the Lord’; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob; still others will write on their hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and will take the name Israel.

v1 – What does God want us to hear?

Though Isaiah 43 ended with a warning of judgment, it did not mean God would take back His promise of hope and restoration. Israel could still know the goodness of the LORD if they would only turn back to Him.

v2 – What is the significance of God being our Creator?

Thus says the LORD who made you: This reminds us that God is still active in and responsible for creation. He didn’t just create Adam and Eve and then let the whole thing go. There is a sense in which God has made each one of us, so we each have a personal obligation to Him as our Creator.

- Thus, we should not be driven by fear

Who is Jeshurun that God chose?

The name Jeshurun means “the upright one.” It is used here as a contrast to the name Jacob, even as Israel is sometimes used as a contrast to Jacob.

- The name Jeshurun appears only three more times in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 32:15, 33:5, 26; and in all cases it is used of Israel... this word bespeaks a wonder of grace, for He calls His deeply sinful people His beloved, His upright one.

v3 – What is this water that God will pour out?

For I will pour water on him... I will pour My Spirit on your descendants: This is a glorious promise to a humble, returning Israel. God will not simply give them His Spirit; He will pour out His Spirit on them as if water was poured over them.

Why is the pouring of water a good analogy for the pouring of the Spirit?

Water gives life and it cleanses, all characteristics of the Spirit. There is also a flow in the giving of the Spirit. This is abundance in the giving of the Spirit. This is an evident giving of the Spirit. God wants to pour His Spirit upon His people! If you experience a few drops, God wants to pour. If you are bone dry, God wants to pour.

Who receives this gift of the Spirit?

Those who are thirsty. When we are thirsty for the outpouring of the Spirit, ask for it and receive it in faith, we can expect to be poured on. God is looking for dry ground to pour out floods upon.

What promise is here for our offspring?

God doesn’t only want to pour His Spirit; He also wants to pour His blessing, on us and our offspring.

v4 – What results from God pouring out His Spirit?

They will spring up among the grass like willows: The effect of the poured-out Spirit is life. Life springs up and grows where the Spirit of God is poured out.

v5 – What else results from God pouring out His Spirit?

One will say, “I am the LORD’s”: When the Holy Spirit is poured out on us, we know we belong to the Lord, and we aren’t afraid to say it.

Another will write with his hand, “The LORD’s,” and name himself by the name of Israel: When the Holy Spirit is poured out on us, we want to take the name of the Lord. We want everyone to know we belong to Him, and He belongs to us.

When you think of God pouring out His Spirit, what comes to mind?

Pentecost... and Peter quoting Joel 2 to explain it: the early and later rain of the Holy Spirit; the later rain will be on Israel during the Tribulation.

Isaiah 44:6-20 – The LORD alone is God (NIV)

⁶ “This is what the Lord says— Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. ⁷ Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come— yes, let them foretell what will come. ⁸ Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.” ⁹ All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. ¹⁰ Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit nothing? ¹¹ People who do that will be put to shame; such craftsmen are only human beings. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and shame. ¹² The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. ¹³ The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in human form, human form in all its glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. ¹⁴ He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. ¹⁵ It is used as fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. ¹⁶ Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.” ¹⁷ From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, “Save me! You are my god!” ¹⁸ They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. ¹⁹ No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, “Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?” ²⁰ Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?”

v6 – What terms are used here for Jesus?

Lord, King of Israel, Redeemer, Lord of Hosts, the First and Last... Jesus has all of these roles.

How does Jesus being referred to as the First and Last reveal His uniqueness?

Only the Creator-God is first and last.

- The LORD has already taken this unique title in Isaiah 41:4, in the same context of proclaiming His glory against the feeble false gods.
- An idol can never be the First, because an idol needs someone to make him. An idol can never be the Last because they wear out and break.

But the Lord GOD of Israel is both the First and the Last; He is completely unique, and besides Him there is no God.

How is it God is first? Where did God come from?

A common argument from atheists and skeptics is that if all things need a cause, then God must also need a cause. The conclusion is that if God needed a cause, then God is not God.

- The question is tricky because it sneaks in the false assumption that God came from somewhere and then asks where that might be.
- The answer is that the question does not even make sense. It is like asking, “What does blue smell like?” Blue is not in the category of things that have a smell, so the question itself is flawed.

God is not in the category of things that are created or caused. God is uncaused and uncreated—He simply exists.

How do we know our Creator-God is self-existing?

Simple logic... We know that from nothing, nothing comes. So, if there were ever a time when there was absolutely nothing in existence, then nothing would have ever come into existence.

- But things do exist. Therefore, since there could never have been absolutely nothing, something had to have always been in existence.

That ever-existing thing is what we call God. God is the uncaused Being that caused everything else to come into existence.

- God is the uncreated Creator who created the universe and everything in it.

What does it tell us that Jesus takes the same title of the First and the Last in Revelation 1:17 and 22:13?

If the LORD is the First and the Last according to Isaiah 44:6, and if Jesus is the First and the Last according to Revelation 1:17 and 22:13, since there cannot be two firsts or two lasts, Jesus must be the LORD God.

v7 – Who can proclaim as God does?

None, only God. Because God is the First and the Last, He lives outside our time-domain and can proclaim things before they happen. He can proclaim the things that are coming and shall come. This shows God really is who He says He is, watching and directing human and cosmic history as it makes its course down His appointed path.

v8 – What benefit is there to us for knowing God is in control of history?

Do not fear, nor be afraid: Knowing these truths about God isn't only good for winning theological quiz games. When we really know who God is, and His great wisdom and authority over all things, it erases all fear in our lives.

Who are God's witnesses?

It is God's people who know Him and have seen Him working in their lives.

What does it mean that *there is no other Rock*?

Since God is the only God, He is the only solid ground to build our life upon.

v9 – Why don't people worship likenesses of gods today?

Those who make an image, all of them are useless: Isaiah will brilliantly show the foolishness of idol makers. A simple look at how idols are made shows how silly it is to regard them as gods, so the idol makers themselves are their own witnesses against themselves.

Who were the creators of idols?

The workmen, they are mere men: Isaiah looked at the people who made idols and noticed that they themselves were only weak, frail men. The blacksmith becomes hungry, and his strength fails. The craftsman works hard with wood, but it is only wood. Half of the tree is made into an object of worship and trust, and the other half is burned for a warm fire and cooking.

Why do idol worshipers persist?

They do not know nor understand; for He has shut their eyes, so they cannot see: How could the idol makers fail to see what is so obvious about the stupidity of idolatry? God has shut their eyes and shut their hearts.

Is this unjust of God? Is He condemning man for something that He is really responsible for?

Not at all. They first loved the darkness and chose their blindness, then the LORD gave them what they wanted. Isaiah points to this when he writes, no one considers in his heart, nor is there knowledge nor understanding to say...a deceived heart has turned him aside.

- When God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He was allowing Pharaoh's heart to do what Pharaoh wanted to do — God was giving Pharaoh over to his sin (Rom 1:18-32).

v10-11 – Who promote the worship of worthless idols?

All the companions of the one who makes the idol... government workers who worship the government, scientists who worship science, financial gurus who worship money, etc... misery loves company!

v12 – How is the idol-fashioning blacksmith unlike God?

He gets hungry and has to eat, he has to drink water or be faint.

v13-14 – How is the idol-fashioning carpenter unlike God?

He is dependent on God's provision to supply him the wood needed for his work.

- It is like a scientist boasting that life is not all that special, that it is just a matter of time before men can demonstrate that he can create life... so he challenges God to a contest in the creation of life and God accepts that challenge: the scientist starts by grabbing a handful of soil and God says, hey, get your own soil.

v15-17 – What do people do with the wood God makes?

Men uses it to fuel a fire for warmth or cooking, and for fashioning an idol to worship. He uses the creation of God as an object of worship... the very definition of idolatry.

- He expects deliverance for a god of his own creation.

v18 – Why do people expect deliverance from idols?

They lack understanding because they have blinded themselves to the Truth. They find their comfort in worshiping a god of their own making... they have more control that way. Ultimately, they are worshiping themselves, reasoning there is no Creator-God.

v19 – How are idol worshipers illogical?

The very material they use to create the idol is known to not stand the test of time and is only good for burning. Idol worship is worthless.

v20 – Ultimately, what then is the value of idol worship?

He feeds on ashes: The wooden idol from the craftsman's shop is just a warm fire away from being ashes.

- Worshipping and serving an idol — any false god — is as wise and as satisfying as eating ashes. We can only satisfy our soul in God.

If idols cannot deliver the soul, why worship them?

The one given over to a false god is so entranced in the lie that he is in bondage. He holds the idol in his right hand — the hand of power and authority — yet has deceived himself and cannot see that it is a lie.

- Most people in this world are in bondage to a lie.

Isaiah 44:21-28 – Israel is not forgotten (NIV)

²¹ “Remember these things, Jacob, for you, Israel, are my servant. I have made you, you are my servant; Israel, I will not forget you. ²² I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.” ²³ Sing for joy, you heavens, for the Lord has done this; shout aloud, you earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel. ²⁴ “This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, ²⁵ who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, ²⁶ who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited, of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’ and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them,’ ²⁷ who says to the watery deep, ‘Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,’ ²⁸ who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.””

v21-22 – What should Israel (and all God’s people) remember?

As Israel remembers the foolishness of making and worshipping idols, it should inspire greater trust and confidence in God. When we think about the alternatives to following the LORD, it should make us follow Him all the more closely.

- As Peter said to Jesus, *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.* (John 6:68)

If the foolishness of the alternative wasn’t enough, God gives His people many more reasons to trust and love Him: *I have formed you, you are My servant...you will not be forgotten by Me.... I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions.... I have redeemed you.*

- Any one of these would be reason enough, but combined, they are overwhelming.

v23 – What should Israel do as they see who God is?

Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it: This is the only logical reaction to seeing who God is. And if God’s people won’t do it, then creation itself will (*Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break into singing, you mountains*).

What does it mean that the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel?

Creation rejoices when God saves and glorifies Himself in His people. Paul developed this theme in Romans 8:19-22.

v24-27 – What credentials does the Lord remind us of in this passage?

The Lord claims to be Israel’s Redeemer, the Creator of each person (*who formed you from the womb*), the Creator of all things (*who makes all things*), wiser and greater than anyone (*who frustrates the signs of the babblers*), who upholds His own (*who confirms the word of His Servant*), who resurrects dead cities (*who says to Jerusalem, “You shall be inhabited”*), and who has authority over all creation (*who says to the deep, “Be dry!”*).

How can God back up such great claims about Himself?

Proof is in the pudding... all you have to do is be observant. These accomplishments of God are easily seen by those who are open to a relationship with Him.

v25 – How does God foil the signs of false prophets (babblers, NKJV)?

Truth has a way of becoming manifest... truth passes the test of time. The fake news crowd will eventually be exposed as the false prophets they are.

How does God make fools of diviners?

He exposes them as the frauds they are. NKJV: drives them mad... as they are exposed, they become increasingly irrational.

How does God overthrow the learning of the wise?

Those who have bought into human philosophies and wisdom will be shown to have believed a lie.

v26 – What promise is here for us?

God is faithful to His Word as repeated by us as His servants.

What do God’s messengers proclaim here?

That, *Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’ of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’ and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them.* This has been fulfilled in our lifetime and foreshadows Israel’s redemption as a nation during the Millennial Kingdom.

v27 – When would *the watery deep*, ‘*Be dry, and I will dry up your streams*’?

This reminds Israel of God’s deliverance in the Exodus when Israel was able to escape from Pharaoh’s army across the Red Sea on dry land and when they entered the promised land with the Jordan being dried up.

v28 – What is foretold here about Cyrus?

God proves He is who He claims to be by announcing the name of a deliverer for Israel’s Babylonian exiles — and Isaiah wrote this more than 200 years before Cyrus fulfilled this prophecy.

- The prophet alluded to the king who would bring about Israel’s release from captivity in Isaiah 41:2, but in this passage, amazingly, he mentions him by name.
- This is undeniable evidence of the certainty and exactness of God’s foreknowledge; a fitting conclusion in the dispute between God and idols.

Could the name of Cyrus been added later to just make it look like God’s Word was very specific?

Some believe that. But this doesn’t hold true, because the whole section is carefully written to dramatically reveal the name of Cyrus. Just the name couldn’t have been written in later.

- Josephus in his Antiquities relates that when Cyrus came across his name mentioned in this place in Isaiah 220 years before he lived, he was seized by a holy desire to fulfill what was written of him.
- An atheist sceptic would say, “Ah ha! Self-fulfilling prophecy! (As if all prophecy could be self-fulfilled by God’s people.) Even if this did influence Cyrus, it was still fulfilled exactly as God said.

How was it that Cyrus was God’s shepherd?

Cyrus was a shepherd in the sense that God used him to do something good and helpful for Israel.

- Kings were called ‘shepherds’ as being guardians and caretakers of their people (56:11; 2 Samuel 24:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Jeremiah 2:8). The title here signifies that the coming conqueror is the Lord’s appointed caretaker — even, as a shepherd would, to lead them into their proper pastures.

How did Cyrus perform all God’s pleasure?

Cyrus was a special instrument in God’s hand, for God’s work. He would do the work of the LORD and open the door for the work of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple after the Babylonians destroyed them.

- The royal proclamations of Cyrus fulfilling this prophecy are found in Ezra 1:2 and 2 Chronicles 36:23.

What did *drying up the rivers* (v27) have to do with the temple foundation being laid?

That will put it into the heart of Cyrus to dry up the Euphrates, and so to take Babylon. Interestingly, as Ezra records (3:10-13; 5:16), in the days of Cyrus the rebuilding of the temple did not progress beyond the laying of the foundations.

How should we respond when we see the fulfillment of such amazingly specific prophecy?

It is no wonder that God proves who He is through predicted and fulfilled prophecy...

2 Peter 1:19-21 – *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

This should light a fire in us to get on with what God is calling us to do.

What applications come to mind from our discussion?

- God wants to pour out His Spirit on us... all we need to be is receptive.
- Jesus is the unique God-man, the only one who could possibly redeem us!
- Idol worship is illogical... don’t be swayed by the wisdom of the world.
- God reveals Himself in many ways... those who don’t see this are willfully ignorant.
- God is the only one that can declare the end from the beginning... those who don’t study God’s prophetic Word have a deficient picture of Him.