

Look to God & be Saved

Isaiah 45

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7/2/2023

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
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Isaiah 45:1-7 – Looking to God who chose Cyrus (NIV)

“This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: ²I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. ³I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. ⁴For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.

⁵I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. ⁷I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.

v1 – To whom is God specifically speaking here?

Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus: Isaiah carries on this remarkable prophecy from the previous chapter. In it, God announces — by name — the deliverer for His people from a coming captivity, and He does it 200 years before the man Cyrus is born.

Why is Cyrus referred to as God’s anointed?

This means that Cyrus had a particular anointing from God for his work. God poured out His Spirit on a pagan king because He wanted to use that man to bless and deliver His people.

- Although God normally employed Israelites as His representatives, he is sovereign and uses whom he will.

Did Cyrus get the message from God?

Apparently so: “These things Cyrus knew from reading the book of prophecy which Isaiah had left behind two hundred and ten years earlier.” (Josephus, Antiquities)

How did Cyrus benefit from God holding his hand?

Like many of us, Cyrus could look back on his life and see how the LORD held his hand the entire time.

To subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings: Cyrus had a remarkable military career...

Cyrus subdued the Syrians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappodcians, Phrygians, the Lydians, Carians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, the Bactrians, Indians, Cilicians, Sacians, Paphloagonians, Maryandines, and many other nations. He also had a dominion over the Asiatics, Greeks, Cyprians, Egyptians; he vanquished whatever country he invaded.

What was the most significant conquest of Cyrus?

To open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut... I will break in pieces the gates of bronze: The armies of the Medes and Persians, under Cyrus, conquered the city of Babylon in a remarkable raid described in Daniel 5. According to the ancient historian Herodotus, while King Belshazzar of Babylon held a reckless party, Cyrus conquered the city by diverting the flow of the Euphrates into a nearby swamp; thus, lowering the level of the river so his troops could march through the water and under the river-gates. But they still would not have been able to enter, had not the bronze gates of the inner walls been left inexplicably unlocked. God opened the gates of the city of Babylon for Cyrus and put it in writing 200 years before it happened.

v2 – When would God break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron?

This is somewhat rhetorical... God removed barriers that would keep Cyrus from being successful in his conquests.

v3 -What was the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places that God gave Cyrus?

The night they conquered the city, Cyrus and his armies took all the staggering treasures of Babylon — and it was important that Cyrus know that the LORD had given it to him.

When did Cyrus know it was God who delivered Babylon to him?

Hopefully at some point in his life. But on the night Babylon fell, Cyrus probably had no great sense of the LORD's guidance or presence. He probably thought himself both brilliant and lucky. Often, we succeed in something only by the blessing and pleasure of God, and never see the miraculous hand of God behind it all.

Why did God name Cyrus as the one He would use to bless Israel?

God announced this 200 years before its fulfillment so that Cyrus would know and glorify the LORD. But the LORD also did it so Cyrus would show kindness to the people of God, granting them permission to return to the Promised Land from the captivity imposed on them by the Babylonians.

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

v4 – Why did God chose Cyrus?

For Jacob My servant's sake: Cyrus would like to think that God picked him because he was the smartest or most talented or strongest man available. Really, God's focus was on His people. It wasn't Cyrus that moved God to act, but the condition and cry of His people.

- That all these victories were for the sake of little Israel is one of the ironies of God's control of history.

v4-5 – If God would call and bless with success someone who didn't know Him, what will He do for His people?

I have named you, though you have not known Me.... I will gird you, though you have not known Me: Cyrus didn't even know the LORD, yet God could anoint him, guide him, bless him, and use him. How much more should God be able to do through those who have at least a mustard seed's worth of faith in Him.

Proverbs 21:1 – *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.*

God can work in and through others in very unexpected ways.

v6 – Did Cyrus come to have faith in God?

That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me: It certainly would appear so...

Ezra 1:2 – *Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.*

When Cyrus made his proclamation allowing the people of God to return to the Promised Land, that he acknowledged to the whole world the greatness and uniqueness of the LORD God of Israel.

v7 – How would the prophecies of Cyrus be a comfort to Israel when they are subjected to the tyranny of Babylon?

God is in control. Since this prophecy was given long before God's people went into the captivity Isaiah now announces deliverance from, they could be comforted through the captivity by knowing God is in control.

How would this passage pointing out that God created the light and darkness have resonated with Cyrus?

There are not two gods or forces in heaven, one good and one bad, as in a dualistic "yin and yang" sense. Cyrus was a Persian, and Persians had a dualistic concept of God and the world. Their good god they called Ahura-mazda and the evil god Angra-mainya. The former had created the light, the second the darkness.

So, since God creates darkness and calamity, does that mean He created evil?

God allows evil and uses it to accomplish His eternal purpose of bringing together all things in Jesus...

Ephesians 1:9-10 – *having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.*

If God could further His eternal purpose by allowing His Son to die a wicked, unjust death on a cross, then He knows how to use what He allows for His eternal purpose.

- God uses evil to bring forth good

When should we remember that God is in control?

When God does great, miraculous things, it is easy to believe that He is in control. When times are hard and the trials heavy, we need to believe it all the more.

Isaiah 45:8-13 – Looking to God who created everything

⁸ “*You heavens above, rain down my righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let the salvation spring up, let righteousness flourish with it; I, the Lord, have created it.*” ⁹ “*Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’ Does your work say, ‘The potter has no hands?’*” ¹⁰ “*Woe to the one who says to a father, ‘What have you begotten?’ or to a mother, ‘What have you brought to birth?’*” ¹¹ “*This is what the Lord says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?*” ¹² “*It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.*” ¹³ “*I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the Lord Almighty.*”

v8 – What specifically does God create as described here?

Rain down, you heavens: The great God described in the previous passage can speak to the heavens and bring rain. It is true in the literal, natural sense; but it is also true in a literal spiritual sense. God can send a flood from heaven, and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation: God can send His blessing from every direction. It comes down from the heavens, it comes up from the earth.

How is it that salvation is associated with righteousness?

They spring up together... When God brings salvation to a life, He also brings righteousness to that life. They spring up together.

v9 – How is the wrath of God stirred up?

Woe to him who strives with his Maker: Knowing that God is the Creator of all things should make us hesitant to oppose Him in any way. It is as foolish as for the clay to say to him who forms it, “What are you making?”

Why is it foolish to oppose the Creator?

It is foolish to oppose our Creator because...

- since He made us, He can break us.
- since He made us, He knows what is best for us.
- we owe the greatest obligation to Him.

What does it mean that the potter has no hands?

The only thing more foolish than the creature resisting and opposing the Creator is for the creature to believe there is no Creator! Isaiah pictures a clay pot, the handiwork of the potter saying, “My potter has no hands. I have no Creator!”

- This is effectively what the evolutionist is saying.

v10 – What is foolish about questioning our Father?

Woe to him who says to his father, ‘What are you begetting?’ The begotten has no say in his coming to be. It is simply foolish to question and accuse God over how He made us.

- This is effectively what the transgenders are saying. Each of us has our strengths and weaknesses, and we each have our triumphs and challenges. We simply need to accept what we are before God and look for His redeeming, transforming power to conform us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ...

Romans 8:29 – *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren*

v11 – Should we question God?

We should question Him to grow in our understanding of His revelation to us. But if we are questioning whether His is right to do what He said He would do regarding His people, we would be in error.

v12 – Why does God keep reminding us of His role as our Creator?

I have made the earth, and created man on it: The importance of this truth cannot be disputed. When we reject God as Creator, we reject the God of the Bible, and serve a God of our own imagination.

- He really did make us, and it really does matter.
- The Creator is not only the One who began everything, but also the One who maintains everything in existence, controls and guides everything.

v13 – What specifically will God do with His power?

I will direct all his ways; he shall build My city and let My exiles go free: The God of all power and creation uses that power on behalf of His people. He will direct the ways of the announced deliverer — Cyrus — and cause him to rebuild Jerusalem and release the people of God captive in a foreign land.

- Cyrus would do it not for price or reward, but out of a conviction from God that he must do it.

Isaiah 45:14-25 – Looking to the Lord who is above all

¹⁴ *This is what the Lord says: “The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabceans—they will come over to you and will be yours; they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains. They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, ‘Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god.’”* ¹⁵ *Truly you are a God who has been hiding himself, the God and Savior of Israel.* ¹⁶ *All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together.* ¹⁷ *But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.* ¹⁸ *For this is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited—he says: “I am the Lord, and there is no other.* ¹⁹ *I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob’s descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right.*

²⁰ *“Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.*

²¹ *Declare what is to be, present it—let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.* ²² *“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.* ²³ *By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.* ²⁴ *They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’” All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.*

²⁵ *But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the Lord and will make their boast in him.*

v14 – When will the Gentile nations recognize the God of Israel?

This will be the case during the Millennial Kingdom.

Zechariah 8:23 – In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

How is it Israel will subject Gentile people to chains during the Millennial kingdom?

Even as Israel was led away into captivity by means of a forced relocation, so one day Israel will be supreme among the nations and lead them as they and the Lord please.

- The submission of the nations to Israel is not so much to Israel itself, as it is to the God of Israel.

v15 – What does it mean that God hides Himself?

It isn’t that God hides Himself from the seeking sinner. Isaiah simply declares what Paul would later say...

1 Timothy 1:17 – Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

God is the perfect gentleman, hides Himself from those who reject Him giving them what they want.

Why doesn’t God make His presence more obvious to unbelievers?

2 Corinthians 5:7 – For we walk by faith, not by sight. God is looking for those who will respond to Him by faith. He has made His presence known to those who truly seek Him.

v16 – What will happen to those who reject God?

They will be ashamed, disgraced, and go into confusion (NKJV)?

Does this explain why there is so much confusion today over gender?

1 Corinthians 14:33 – For God is not the author of confusion but of peace

As more people reject God they are given over to an illogical, debased mind (Romans 1:28) so that confusion reigns. Confusion is the mark of a godless society.

v17 – What is this everlasting salvation promised to Israel?

This is not just a temporal deliverance that God has blessed the nation of Israel with many times, it is permanent, eternal. This will happen during the Tribulation, be foreshadowed during the Millennial Kingdom, and ultimately realized during the Eternal State.

- As individuals, we can experience that everlasting salvation right now.

v18 – What is again emphasized here?

For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens: By sheer repetition, Isaiah virtually pounds it into our awareness — that God is our Creator, and we have obligations to Him as our Creator. He created us for a reason; we have a purpose.

What does it mean that God did not create the earth in vain?

God created the earth to be inhabited. God had a purpose for the earth from the beginning.

How does the fact that God did not create the earth in vain add credibility to the Gap Theory?

The Hebrew translated vain here is the same Hebrew word for void found in Genesis 1:2. The idea is that God did not create it in vain (void), but that it became without form and void due to the earth being used as a place for angels to be tested.

- According to the Gap Theory, Genesis 1:3 and the following verses describe the re-creation of a world that was made void as a consequence of Satan and the other fallen angels exercising their fallenness.

Isn't the Gap Theory an attempt to explain why the earth looks old as naturalists would have us believe?

No, some naïve Gap Theorists may think so but we live on a relatively young earth that was re-created as Genesis describes about 6,000 years ago.

- The fossils were not due to the Gap Theory's earth becoming void, they were due to the flood of Noah's day.
- The Bible says plainly death came by Adam (Romans 5:12), and since fossils are the result of death, they could not have happened before Adam's time.

What then is the value of the Gap theory?

It answers the question, when did Satan fall. It explains why there appears to be considerable time involved in the fall of Satan, the abundance of his trading (Ezekiel 28:16).

v19 – Is it easy to find God?

I did not say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek Me in vain": It is a wicked thing to think God ever says to His people, "Seek Me in vain." When we seek for God with all of our heart, we will find Him.

Jeremiah 29:13 – *you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

You only have to be open to the truth about God. The Lord has provided enough info about Himself so that all who are generally honest with themselves will recognize it.

Hebrews 11:6 – *he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

v20 – How is the salvation from God contrasted with salvation from the idols?

As the LORD declares His own greatness, faithfulness, and saving power, it naturally contrasts with the foolish idols of the nation — which must be carried, instead of being able to carry the one who worships them.

v21 – What is the significance of God declaring the future from even ancient times?

The amazing phenomenon of predictive prophecy shows that God is who He says He is, and that there is no other God besides Him.

How is God revealing the future to us connected with Him being a just God and a Savior?

As much as anything else, His predictive prophecy shows the amazing power, wisdom, and love of God. At first glance, it is impossible to see how a just God can be a Savior when justice demands that sinners be damned. But prompted by His great love, God fulfilled the righteous demands of His justice at the cross, so He could extend Himself to us as Savior, yet still remain a just God.

v22 – How does this verse encapsulate the gospel?

Can it really be this simple, just look to God and be saved? How else would you describe God's grace... it is God who saves us; all we do is look to Him.

How was this simple looking to God for salvation reinforced in God's Numbers 21 solution for snake bites?

Moses was told to lift up the image of a bronze serpent, raised on a pole, and the people who looked to it lived. The people were saved not by doing anything, but by simply looking to the bronze serpent. They had to trust that something as seemingly foolish as looking at such a thing would be sufficient to save them.

What is the significance of the ends of the earth being invited to look to God for salvation?

The term *ends of the earth* is a euphemism for those far from God.

Why must we look to God alone for salvation?

For I am God, and there is no other: Only the Lord is God. Institutions, the Church, preachers, Christians are not God. We don't look to them; we look to the Lord, for He alone is God.

v23 – What has God sworn by Himself?

When God confirms an oath, He swears by Himself. There is no one greater, so He swears by His own holy name and character.

Hebrews 6:13 – For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself.

That to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath: The LORD here declares there will come a day when every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue will swear by His greatness.

Philippians 2:10-11 – at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father

Paul's quotation of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11 is overwhelming evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ.

When will Isaiah 45:23 and Philippians 2:10-11 be fulfilled?

Certainly, by the Great White Throne Judgment. At that point there is no way even those who were unbelievers in the mortal bodies can not deny the authority and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- It is much better to confess the Lord Jesus Christ while in our mortal bodies than to put that off until later.

v24 – What is the declaration of those who look to God?

Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength:

Righteousness and strength are found in the LORD, not in ourselves or anywhere else. Indeed, in the LORD all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.

Who will be ashamed?

All who have raged against him: Those who have made themselves enemies of God will be ashamed after their mortal lives are over when they will face reality.

v25 – Who will be justified and glorified?

The spiritual descendants of Israel... those who by faith have looked to God for their salvation.

What applications come to mind from our discussion?

- Only God declares the end from the beginning in detail... it is amazing that so many reject this evidence.
- God is not the author of evil but He uses it to serve His purposes.
- It is foolish to oppose the Creator... accept the truth!
- The Gap Theory has merit; God has done much more than what has been revealed.
- Salvation is simple: look to God and be saved.