

ISAIAH 44

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

In today's society it is fashionable, or rather, politically correct, to claim that all paths lead to God. In other words, whether we follow Mohammed or Buddha or Christ makes no difference, we'll still end up in heaven. Another belief that some hold is that the gods of all religions are the same, that we all worship the same god, just in different forms. And many of the people I run into just want to fashion their own god to fit whatever they want him, or her, to be.

The Bible has some things to say about such beliefs and we will consider some of those today as we look at Isaiah chapter 44.

Isaiah 44:1-5

*1 "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel, whom I have chosen:
2 Thus says the Lord who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you **Jeshurun** whom I have chosen.*

*3 'For I will pour out 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;*

4 And they will spring up among the grass Like poplars by streams of water.'

5 "This one will say, 'I am the Lord's'; And that one will call on the name of Jacob; And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to the Lord,' And will name Israel's name with honor.

Despite Israel's disobedience and turning to false gods, she was God's chosen people and the object of his unmerited favor. From the very beginning, from the womb, He had appointed her to be His people, bestowing upon her the title of **Jeshurun**, meaning *Upright One* (Deuteronomy 32:15; 33:5, 26), a token of her eventual conversion to faith in Christ. Circumstances in the reign of Manasseh, king of Judah from 697 B.C. to 642 B.C., when Isaiah was doubtless granted these revelations, may have seemed to indicate a complete and permanent departure from the faith by Israel. But God here explicitly predicts that future Israel was to receive the Living Water and the Holy Spirit poured out upon them, which is exactly what happened at Pentecost (Acts 2). Those that "call on the name of Jacob," could well be the Gentiles who would also join themselves to the children of Jacob to worship their God. Jews and Gentiles then being one in Christ (Romans 2:29). The outpouring of the Spirit in verse 3 is a glimpse of the new covenant which is foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34 NAS:

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

32 *not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord.*

33 *“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “**I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

34 *“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

The confessions of allegiance in verse 5 are a rare preview of the Gentile conversions that will occur in the future. When God pours His Spirit on you, you can't help but bubble over with declarations of who He is and whom you belong to. These *offspring* of Israel in verse 3 mark the flow of God's living water (representing eternal life), just as a line of trees grow up along the course of a river (3, 4).

Isaiah 44:6-8 NAS:

6 *“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.*

7 *‘Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place.*

8 *‘Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.’ ”*

God presents again His challenge to an idol-worshiping world. He asserts His eternal being and His uniqueness as the only true God. Again He points to the testimony of fulfilled predictions, something found only in the Hebrew Scriptures, as evidence of divine authority that no man-invented religion can ever produce. The Jewish nation stands as witness to all the world that only Jehovah is God, and there is no security in anyone but Him. These verses give the real meaning of chapters 40-48 of Isaiah, with their emphasis on God as Israel's Champion, their *Redeemer*, as He was referred to in Isaiah 41:14, as the only God. These verses show proof of God's existence because of His predictions that come true and their reassuring tone about a timid Israel.

Isaiah 44:9-20 NAS:

9 *Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.*

10 *Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit?*

11 *Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand*

up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.

12 The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary.

13 Another shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house.

14 Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow.

15 Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it.

16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire."

17 But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god."

18 They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.

19 No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat it. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!"

20 He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

This section is almost comical as it describes how a man cuts down a tree and uses half of it to warm himself and cook his food, and then he carves up the other half so he can worship it. How can an inanimate thing that can easily be turned to ashes, be his god and any kind of deliverer?

Here Jehovah God exposes the foolishness of polytheism, worshipping more than one god, and the blindness of idolaters, who worship false gods, to the most obvious truth. This passage was undoubtedly intended to strengthen the Jews against the allurements of paganism during their long captivity in Babylon. The idols these pagans delighted in were all decorated with gold and precious stones. The **witnesses** in verse 9 are the spiritually blinded idolaters themselves. Verse 11 tells us that they shall be **put to shame**, as the dreadful judgment of God closes in upon them, and their cities and empire crash in ruins. With merciless sarcasm the Lord points out the foolishness of making a god out of a substance used for firewood. In verse 20 we see that the idol-worshiper feeds his soul

with ashes. Bible-rejecting unbelievers show a similar blindness to obvious and inescapable laws of cause and effect, which prove that the mechanism of the universe requires a Mechanic to design and operate it. But neither idolaters nor postmodern thinkers can answer the all-important question: “*How can I be saved?*”

The description in verses 14-17 turns the visual appeal of idolatry into an embarrassment, sparing no aspect of it. It is a favorite theme of chapters 40-48 (Isaiah 40:18-20; 45:20; 46:1-7). According to these verses, worship of *things*, given by God and shaped by man contains the same absurdity and blasphemy. Doing such things can be catastrophic as Paul tells us in Romans 1.

Romans 1:20-25 NLT:

20 From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.

21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became dark and confused.

22 Claiming to be wise, they became utter fools instead.

23 And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people, or birds and animals and snakes.

24 So God let them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies.

25 Instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe lies. So they worshiped the things God made but not the Creator himself, who is to be praised forever. Amen.

Romans 1:24 is a scary comment: “*God let them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their hearts desired.*” I've heard people criticize God for giving human beings a free will, for giving them the ability to choose. But free will is what distinguishes us from puppets and robots. When God created us in His own image, He took a risk. He gave us intelligence and emotions and free will. He loved us and wanted us to choose to love Him in return, not to be pre-programmed to love Him. Scripture records several places where human beings are asked to choose to serve and worship God. Perhaps the most famous is Joshua 24:14, 15 NAS:

14 "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

15 "And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve.

God calls us to choose to worship Him and to recognize Him as God, not to create false

gods out of the good things He has provided for us such as trees, animals, money, jobs, or other people.

Mankind's eventual inability to see this, which applies as much today as it did in Isaiah's time, comes from a refusal to face it as Isaiah points out in verses 18-20.

Isaiah 44:21-23 NAS:

21 *“Remember these things, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.*

22 *“I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”*

23 *Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the Lord has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.*

Here is a promise of mercy for the nation that stands for God's truth. The many and grievous sins of the Jews would be canceled out, and they could come to God for forgiveness, since He would act for their redemption in appointing Messiah as the atonement for their sins. At such glad tidings the angels of Heaven would sing with joy, and the Old Testament saints who waited in Sheol for Christ's resurrection would shout for joy. Even the nonhuman creation, which eagerly awaits the “*manifestation of the sons of God,*” would share in this triumphal rejoicing. Listen to what Paul writes in Romans 8:19-25, NLT:

19 *For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.*

20 *Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse.*

21 *All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.*

22 *For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

23 *And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us.*

24 *Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don't need to hope for it.*

25 *But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently.*

Isaiah 44:24-28 NAS:

24 *Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, “I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the*

*heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone,
 25 Causing the omens of boasters to fail, Making fools out of diviners,
 Causing wise men to draw back And turning their knowledge into
 foolishness,
 26 Confirming the word of His servant And performing the purpose of His
 messengers. It is I who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of
 the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise up her ruins
again.
 27 "It is I who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make
 your rivers dry.
 28 "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all
 My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the
 temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.' "*

Jehovah God presents himself as the omnipotent Creator, who has prepared Israel from the very beginning as His redeemed people. God also presents Himself as the all-wise Sovereign over history, who overthrows the puny wisdom of the philosophers and servants of this world by exposing the foolishness of all their vain imaginations. The people of the world would never have believed that Jerusalem and its holy Temple would be completely rebuilt seventy years after the Babylonians had demolished them; yet the city and the Temple were restored exactly as God had foretold. The people of the world, too, would have scornfully rejected the possibility that a repopulated Judah would be rebuilt by descendants of Nebuchadnezzar's prisoners; yet God was to bring even that to pass. Least likely of fulfillment, to the mind of an unbeliever, was the prediction that the Jews would be liberated by a non-Israelite pagan like Cyrus; and yet so it happened, 150 years after God predicted it.¹ In these verses God's repeated claim to control and predict the course of history is now dramatically renewed by the specific promises of verses 26–28. Let me read them again.

*26 Confirming the word of His servant And performing the purpose of His
 messengers. It is I who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of
 the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise up her ruins
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 27 "It is I who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make
 your rivers dry.
 28 "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all
 My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the
 temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.' "*

The predictions of a liberator, Cyrus, we learned about in Isaiah 41:2 and 25–29: Remember when Isaiah wrote:

*2 "Who has stirred up this king from the east, who meets victory at every
 step? Who, indeed, but the Lord? He gives him victory over many nations*

¹ Pfeiffer, C. F. 1962. The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament . Moody Press: Chicago

and permits him to trample their kings underfoot. He puts entire armies to the sword. He scatters them in the wind with his bow.

25 "But I have stirred up a leader from the north and east. He will come against the nations and call on my name, and I will give him victory over kings and princes. He will trample them as a potter treads on clay.

26 "Who but I have told you this would happen? Who else predicted this, making you admit that he was right? No one else said a word!

27 I was the first to tell Jerusalem, 'Look! Help is on the way!'

28 Not one of your idols told you this. Not one gave any answer when I asked.

29 See, they are all foolish, worthless things. Your idols are all as empty as the wind.

The veiled predictions of good news for Jerusalem and of a liberator are suddenly unveiled to reveal Cyrus and his edict of rebuilding; a prophecy which duly came to pass according to Ezra1:1–4 NLT:

1 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the Lord fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy by stirring the heart of Cyrus to put this proclamation into writing and to send it throughout his kingdom:

2 "This is what King Cyrus of Persia says: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a Temple at Jerusalem in the land of Judah.

3 All of you who are his people may return to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, who lives in Jerusalem. And may your God be with you!

4 Those who live in any place where Jewish survivors are found should contribute toward their expenses by supplying them with silver and gold, supplies for the journey, and livestock, as well as a freewill offering for the Temple of God in Jerusalem."

Such minuteness of detail is paralleled only in 1 Kings 13:1, 2 NLT, where Josiah is named 300 years before his time:

1 At the Lord's command, a man of God from Judah went to Bethel, and he arrived there just as Jeroboam was approaching the altar to offer a sacrifice.

2 Then at the Lord's command, he shouted, "O altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: A child named Josiah will be born into the dynasty of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests from the pagan shrines who come here to burn incense, and human bones will be burned on you."

The reference to the *depth of the sea* in Isaiah 44:27 is yet another way of referring to the exodus, a reminder of God's ability to perform these new wonders. The term *my shepherd* in verse 28 implies no more than God's use of this ruler for His own ends (see

Isaiah 45:4 and 41:25).²

So, what do we learn about God from this chapter?

- He is our Creator; He forms us in the womb (vs. 2)
- He blesses His children (vs. 3)
- He is the Redeemer (vs. 6)
- He is the Lord of hosts (of angel armies) (vs. 6)
- He is eternal, “*the first and the last*” (vs. 6)
- He is the only God (vs. 6)
- He is a Rock (vs. 8)
- He is the Savior of our sins, the Redeemer (vs. 24)

➤ He is Sovereign, the Supreme Ruler (vs. 26-28). God predicts what will happen and then brings it about. Kings do what God wants them to do; even nature obeys His commands.

Think of the biggest problem you’ve got, or maybe the two biggest problems. Are they too big for you to solve? Does that leave you feeling helpless? Remember your God. If you have received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior then you can rely on God’s character and His promises. Because the Lord God Jehovah is the only God, when you have a relationship with Him, His power, His strength, and His sovereignty can work in your life.

Luke 1:37

"For nothing will be impossible with God."

Jehovah God is the only true God. He is the only place we will find what we’re looking for. How futile to look anywhere else.

² Carson, D. A. 1994. New Bible commentary : 21st century edition. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) . Inter-Varsity Press: Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA