

"Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the Lord have created it!" (Isaiah 45:10)

Last week's lesson on Isaiah 44, you'll remember, continued with a message of hope and encouragement from God for His chosen people! Again telling them "not to fear" because He had "chosen" them and "formed them from the womb...and would help them, and (one day) pour out His Spirit, and blessing, on their descendants--a "gift" (Constable noted) that would have the same effect for the nation of Israel as "pouring out water on dry ground would have on the landscape! Bringing refreshment and new life, and a whole new spiritual aptitude for them (something Joel 2:8-29 indicates will find its ultimate fulfillment at the time of the of Second Advent of Christ)!

He also claimed (in 44:6) that He, the Lord, the King of Israel, and their Redeemer, was "the first and the last, and that there was no God besides Him"! And that they (His people) were to be "witnesses" of His deity! All of which led to Him making another serious indictment against idols and idol-makers! Citing the folly and absurdity that a man would take the same wood he burns to warm himself and bake bread to make an idol, or fashion a graven image, that he would set up in his house to bow down to, and worship and pray to, for deliverance! Idols which cannot speak or comprehend and which, Motyer notes, "have no power to change the human heart but (only) leave the idolater in spiritual darkness and deception with which they started"! What an abomination!

"Remember (He said again) that I have formed (and fashioned!) you, and that you are My servant ...and that you will not be forgotten by Me! I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud...Return to Me, for I have redeemed you! Shout for joy, O heavens for the Lord has done it!" (MacArthur writes that "the national redemption of Israel at Christ's second coming entails also the redemption of all nature, and so the prophet calls upon the whole creation to rejoice"! And Romans 8:19 says that "...the anxious longing of the creation awaits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God"!)

Isaiah 44 ends with the prophecy that the Lord, Israel's Redeemer, and the maker of all things, would enlist a man named Cyrus to be His "shepherd," to "perform all His desires," including the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, laying the foundation for the temple, and allowing Israeli exiles in Babylon to return to their land!

And this set the scene for our lesson last night on Isaiah 45, which begins with God's promise to Cyrus! Let the Word of the Lord speak for itself!

"Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, whom I have taken by the right hand, to subdue nations before him and to loose the loins of kings; to open doors before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut their iron bars. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by My name. For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor though you have not known Me! I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God! I will gird you, though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me!

"I am the Lord, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all things!"

Wow! Can you imagine Cyrus' reaction after hearing these words directly from Almighty God, the God of Israel? (MacArthur writes that "at some point, Cyrus certainly became aware of the true God and His sovereign control over human affairs"!)

Ezra (in Ezra 1:1-3) records how these words from the Lord "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus," leading him to issue a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, acknowledging that it was the Lord, the God of heaven, who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth and appointed him to build a house for Him in Jerusalem! (Interestingly, the historian Josephus records an account of the day when Daniel read Isaiah's prophecy to Cyrus and how, in response, he was moved to declare the proclamation!)

The book of Ezra gives additional details of how the work of God--including the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, and of the city walls--was accomplished in Jerusalem--and how God (using Cyrus and others) fulfilled His promise by allowing His people to return to the Land, after 70 years of captivity in Babylon!

Then verse 8--"Shower, O heavens from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the Lord have created it!"

And verse 22--"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other! The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance!"

The apostle Paul, wrote (in Philippians 2:9-11), how God the Father has "exalted His Son, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus (quoting from Isaiah 45:23) every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!"

(MacArthur notes that "eventually, in the kingdom age, the Lord will cause righteous goodness to prevail throughout the world, just as He promised Israel, and that all nations will worship the one true God of Israel!")

Nelson writes that "as impressive as God's sovereign plan for Cyrus is (or was!), how much more impressive are His eternal plans for all nations from which He will make a people for Himself forever!"

"Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness" on us and our land!

Lowell