

"Remember the miracles of long ago. Acknowledge that I am God, and there is no other. I am God and there is none like Me. I declare from the beginning how it will end and foretell from the start what has not yet happened. I decree that My purpose will stand, and I will fulfill My every purpose!" (Isaiah 46:9-10, the Passion translation)!

Last week's lesson on Isaiah 45 dealt with the overthrow of Babylon (and another putdown of idols and idol worshippers), and began with God's promise to Cyrus, king of Persia, whom He called by name (over a century before he was born), and designated as "His anointed"--the one He said He would "take by the hand to subdue nations before him (and specifically Babylon!), loose the loins of kings; open doors before him...and go before him and make the rough places smooth...give him the treasures of darkness, and hidden wealth of secret places, so that he (Cyrus) would know that it was He, the Lord, the God of Israel, His chosen one"! He would also "give him a title of honor...and gird him (or arm him)," even though he had not known Him, "that (all) men might know from the rising to the setting of the sun...that He was the Lord, and that there was no one besides Him"!

He was the One, He said, "forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity"! The One with the power to call for the clouds of heaven to "pour down righteousness" upon the earth (which He would bring about in the end time)! But "woe" to the one who would "quarrel with His Maker"! (Will the clay question the potter?)

He is, Isaiah writes, "the God of Israel, Savior"! The One who provides "everlasting salvation...and will not be put to shame or humiliated"! In contrast with the "dumb and dead" wooden idols of Babylon which people carry around and pray to, but which "cannot save"--and which, along with those manufacture them, "will all go away together in shame and humiliation"!

"He is the Lord who created the heavens and established the earth--not as a waste place--but to be inhabited by man, whom He created...and there is no God besides Him" (He stated again)!

And Isaiah 45 ends with another plea: For all those who hear the words of His mouth, to "turn to Him and be saved, all the ends of the world; that to Me every knee will bow and every tongue will swear allegiance"!

And that sets the tone for Isaiah 46, where Isaiah records the words of God (for the fourth and final time, in the book of Isaiah) about the folly of idol worship--describing how two of the most prominent gods of Babylon (Bel, or Baal, and Nebo) not only couldn't save Babylon from its enemies, but had to be carried around on the backs of "burdened-down beasts" as they were all carried away together into captivity! This in contrast with the God of Israel who had "borne the house of Israel from birth, carrying them from the womb," while promising to "bear them up even to their graying years...and deliver them"!

"To whom would you liken Me?" says the Lord?"

"Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other...and no one like Me--declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure...I have planned it, surely I will do it!' (MacArthur writes that all Isaiah's readers need to remember "all the past histories of fulfilled prophecies, as well as His miraculous deliveries, such as that from Egypt, and providential blessings Israel has experienced--all evidences that God alone is God!")

And so, our lesson ends with these words of ultimate hope for Israel: "Listen to me, you stubborn-minded, who are far from righteousness! I bring near My righteousness; it is not far off; and My salvation will not delay! And I will grant salvation in Zion, and My glory for Israel!"

The prophet Joel adds (in Joel 3:17): "Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain...!"

"His purpose will be accomplished!" (And not just for Israel!)

Do you think God considers it important for you and I to know (without any doubt!) that He is God, and God alone?

"Bless the Lord, O My soul! O ah O my soul! I'll worship His holy name...!" Sing along!

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