

In a Dark Place of the Earth

Isaiah 45:1 – 46:13

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~ Our Spiritual Safari continues through a section of prophecy that will prove impossible to understand completely if it is not placed in its proper setting and in a correct light. Previously, Isaiah recorded God's judgment on the nations surrounding Israel; and we learned about the creation of the material universe, idolatry, grace, and the salvation of Israel. In this report, we are introduced to Cyrus in the form of his calling; before he was ever even born. Technically speaking, the last five verses of chapter forty-four should be verses one through five of chapter forty-five. We've seen several other unfortunate chapter breaks, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, as we have moved forward on safari. I'm not trying to split theological hairs but, rather, simply affording an educated, sincere, proper, correct, and complete Bible study to the best of my ability by pointing certain technicalities out. Overall, we're still just barely scratching the surface of available knowledge here.

Naturally, Isaiah didn't break his writings down into chapter and verse. Those were made later by men. It is said that Stephanus, a monk in the middle-ages, marked off the chapters by riding a donkey through the Alps while reading Scripture, and every time the donkey would stop, he would lurch forward with his pen and mark the place as a chapter break. Well, that's a fable, of course, but sometimes it seems to me that's the way it was done. Frankly, I think the donkey himself may have divided some of them, because they definitely shouldn't all be divided where they are. But I know God permitted it; because we hold the Bible inspired and inerrant. Those paradox's are probably the main reason I am so wildly misunderstood — because most people don't understand God. So, they can never understand me. We'll just leave it at that for now....

XLV

1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

~ Isaiah prophesied of Cyrus two full centuries before Cyrus was born. I think Cyrus is marked out by name for two primary reasons: one, so that there would be no misunderstanding who Isaiah was talking about later when this prophecy was fulfilled and, two, Cyrus made the decree that returned the nation Israel from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple. A third reason, which should likely be number one, is that Isaiah has also already identified One born of a virgin; Emmanuel – God with us. So, if Isaiah was accurate about Cyrus two hundred years beforehand – and he was – then Israel should be well-prepared for the Lord Jesus Christ, Who comes along some seven hundred years later. So, I think there is a reasonable explanation as to why Cyrus is called by name in this chapter.

Interestingly, God called Cyrus “*anointed*” – which is the only time a Gentile is labeled that in Scripture — and otherwise a term reserved exclusively for the Lord Jesus Christ. See, Cyrus was “*anointed*” because he delivered the will of God by setting the Jewish captives free, and encouraging them to return home to rebuild Jerusalem. In that respect, Cyrus could be called a Gentile Messiah of Israel. I’m sure some will wince at that theology. Even so, it makes Cyrus a vague foreshadow of Jesus, Who was yet to appear as a man, according to a secular perspective. The “*two leaved gates*” were the gates of Babylon. They were the physical obstacle that prohibited the Israelites from walking out of slavery and returning to Palestine. Cyrus flung those gates open to freedom for any Jew that wanted to go.

Further, God called Cyrus *"My shepherd."* Cyrus did *"God's pleasure"* – NOT His will! Make a note. That's different, friends – and it is very important to understand. Remember, God used Assyria to take the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity, and God used Babylon to destroy Jerusalem, and to take Judah and Benjamin away in captivity; and evil men carried out the Lord's work in all of that. Cyrus, however, is different; because he actually listened to those who spoke to him about God. See, when we get to Heaven, we're going to look around and, strangely, we're going to notice a *WHOLE BUNCH* of people there that we never thought we would see in Heaven. Likewise, there are going to be a *WHOLE BUNCH* of people conspicuously absent; people we thought *for sure* would be there. Those two things alone are going to be huge surprises for almost everyone. I know we're going to be amazed – and some probably a little disappointed – to see *ME*. But, too bad, friends; it looks like you're stuck with me. Anyone who trusted Christ as their Savior will be in Heaven. I believe Cyrus is going to be there with us, too....

4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.

7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

~ Here is another remarkable statement Isaiah made concerning the creation of the universe; and which was written a *LONG* time before modern science came to the conclusion that light is formed, and that darkness is created by the absence of light. Interestingly, this is one scientific fact that has never changed throughout the centuries – while almost all other scientific findings have been changed. Now, *"evil"* in verse seven, is better translated as *"sorrow," "difficulties," "tragedies," "disasters," "wretchedness," "adversity," "afflictions"* and *"calamities"* –

but it *NEVER* refers to - nor can it properly be translated as - “*S-I-N*.” God “*created evil*” *ONLY* in the sense that these things were made as a *SURE RESULT AND FRUIT OF SIN*. This is really just the Old Testament way of saying “*the wages of sin is death*.” If we do certain things, then certain other things will happen naturally. Good and bad.

As a side note, Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. It is certainly the closest religion to hold credibility amongst all other worldly religions. It was founded by the Prophet Zoroaster, in ancient Iran, approximately 3,500 years ago. It is still a popular religion in certain parts of the world today. Their teaching is that Ahura Mazda is the god of light. Well, they were very close to the truth, but they never attained to it; and the reason they worshipped only one God is because they had come into contact with the nation Israel, as Israel witnessed to the world. To the worshipper of Zoroaster, darkness is the god of evil.

Modern university teaches that good and evil are relative terms; depending on whatever you deem your own personal assessment and understanding of good and evil to be. God calls that foolishness. This passage is God’s answer to Zoroastrianism, friends. Make no mistake about it: God says sin will pay off someday – in a very bad way. The moment we indulge in sin, we are imputed a wage; and we won’t need a union to enforce the rules, because we are going to be paid in full. God has so established this universe that, when one transgresses against God or His people, then God is going to avenge the problem one hundred percent – and, my friend, He *ALWAYS* does exactly that – you can just write that down....

8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.

9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

10 Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

11 Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

~ Sir James Hopwood Jeans was a Christian astronomer who developed a theory that most astrologers still follow today. He wrote a book entitled *"This Expanding Universe."* It states that all galaxies and planetary systems grow larger every minute, and are moving away from each other at all times. It's another scientific theory that hasn't needed updating since forever-ago. When God says, *"I have stretched out the Heavens"* – that's no accident by Isaiah. We have already learned that Isaiah knew the earth was a round ball.

See, friends, these ancient men knew just a little bit more than we think they knew; and I would suspect they knew much more than we know today. God took nothing and made something from it. I wouldn't be surprised if Isaiah knew how God did it. You can talk about the assured findings of theoretical science on any subject from evolution to quantum mechanics until you turn blue in the face and fall over dead but, until you come up with something from nothing, then you have neither legitimate nor credible assumptions on ANY level to argue. God's declaration in His Word is the only plausible answer. He said He created it all. By His Word brought He all things into existence. Nothing else makes sense....

13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.

14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.

15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.

17 But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.

19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

24 Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

XLVI

1 Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.

2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

3 Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb:

4 And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.

5 To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

~ This chapter is yet another exquisite polemic and brilliant satire against idolatry. Bel and Nebo were the main gods in Babylon. Bel is a shortened form of Balaam – which is where we get the word Beelzebub – a.k.a. Satan. Nebo means “*speaker*” or “*prophet*.” Remember, when Paul and Barnabus went into the Galatian country, the Galatians thought Barnabus was Bel or Jupiter, and that Paul was Nebo or Mercury; because Paul did most of the speaking. Scripture warns us that our warfare is *spiritual*. Behind the idolatry of Babylon was rank, unadulterated Satan worship. Many people are caught up in devil worship today – but most of them have no earthly idea they are – usually in the form of humanism. Some even profess to be born again Christians. They aren’t saved. They’re counterfeit. Well, an idol can be many things, friends: houses, clothes, jobs, money, spouses, children, pets, friends, cars, television, games, music, food – and any number of other things. Frankly, most — *MOST* — people are utterly steeped in idolatry today; and they expend every waking hour appeasing

and worshipping their favorite idol – but they have absolutely no clue whatsoever.

Just be honest with yourselves, dear readers, and answer these questions in prayer to the Lord: do you really get anything out of an educated Bible study? Do you enjoy growing in the grace and knowledge of our Savior and Lord in His Word? Do you really trust Christ with the minute-to-minute problems in your life? If you don't do those things, then I wouldn't bother with "Christianity," because it is a sin for you. I've already admonished you not to bother reading my reports; so, no problems there. Read this very carefully in closing, friends – and I mean *SUPER* carefully as we end this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Bible:

God had been carrying Israel like a woman carries her baby in the womb. The day came to deliver. This section of the Word of God is a real distinction between that which is true and that which is false. Does your religion carry you, or do you carry your religion? Searching out the answer to that question is vital in your life. It affects the way you act, the things you say, the way you say those things, and all manner of deep-seated psychological and subconscious reactions, thoughts and expressions.

God carried our sins because He carries us. He hath born our grief, and carried our sorrows. God also carries our burdens with great care. Cast all your burdens upon Him, for He careth for you. When Christ redeemed man by His death on the cross, He also revealed God to mankind. That single last sentence is the only information whereby we can ever begin to know God. Now, that you know that, He has something else to say to you. He has something else altogether – for your life ~

6 They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

8 Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.

9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

12 Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness:

13 I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory ~

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