

## Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

### Bible Study Notes: Isaiah Chapter 44 - 46

5/14/14

#### Chapter 44 Study Notes

##### Israel the Chosen - Verses 1-5

**44** "But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. <sup>2</sup> This is what the LORD says— he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. <sup>3</sup> For I will pour 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. <sup>4</sup> They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. <sup>5</sup> Some will say, 'I belong to the LORD'; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob; still others will write on their hand, 'The LORD's,' and will take the name Israel.

**44:2** Jeshurun ("the upright one") is a poetic name of endearment for Israel (Deuteronomy 32:15; 33:5, 26).

**44:5** The time will come when Israel will be proud of belonging to God. If we are truly God's, we should be unashamed and delighted to let everyone know about our relationship with him (44:8).

##### The LORD, Not Idols - Verses 6-23

<sup>6</sup> "This is what the LORD says— Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. <sup>7</sup> Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let them foretell what will come. <sup>8</sup> Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one." <sup>9</sup> All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. <sup>10</sup> Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit nothing? <sup>11</sup> People who do that will be put to shame; such craftsmen are only human beings. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and shame. <sup>12</sup> The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. <sup>13</sup> The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in human form, human form in all its glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. <sup>14</sup> He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. <sup>15</sup> It is used as fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. <sup>16</sup> Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, "Ah! I am warm; I see the fire." <sup>17</sup> From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Save me! You are my god!" <sup>18</sup> They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. <sup>19</sup> No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, "Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and

I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?"<sup>20</sup> Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?"<sup>21</sup> "Remember these things, Jacob, for you, Israel, are my servant. I have made you, you are my servant; Israel, I will not forget you."<sup>22</sup> I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you."<sup>23</sup> Sing for joy, you heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, you earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel.

**44:8-9** The manufactured idols were guilty of false advertising. They made big promises, but they were worthless and helpless. In contrast, God fulfills his claims and delivers on all his promises. God challenges us to be his witnesses. When we share our faith with those who can find no meaning in life or have no hope of eternal life, we are not proclaiming anything shoddy or unreliable. God is real and life with him is best. Pray for boldness in your life to share your faith in Christ with friends, relatives, and neighbors.

**44:9-20** Here Isaiah describes how people make their own gods. How absurd to make a god from the same tree that gives firewood. Do we make our own gods—money, fame, or power? If we make a god of our own choosing, we deceive ourselves if we expect it to empower our lives.

**44:21** God said that we should serve our Creator (17:7; 40:28; 43:15; 45:9). Idolaters do the opposite—serving or worshiping what they have made rather than the One who made them. Our Creator paid the price to set us free from our sins against him. By contrast, no idol ever created anybody, and no idol can redeem us from our sins.

### **Jerusalem to Be Inhabited - Verses 24-28**

<sup>24</sup> "This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself,<sup>25</sup> who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense,<sup>26</sup> who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be rebuilt,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,'<sup>27</sup> who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,'<sup>28</sup> who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."' "

**44:25-26** The false prophets were people who claimed to bring messages from God. Diviners or fortune-tellers were people who created fake omens for their own benefit. Because God is truth, he is the standard for all teachings. We can always trust his Word as absolute truth. His Word is completely accurate, and against it we can measure all other teachings. If you are unsure about a teaching, test it against God's Word. God condemned the false prophets because they gave advice opposite to his.

**44:28** Isaiah, who prophesied from about 740 to 681 B.C., called Cyrus by name almost 150 years before he ruled (559-530 B.C.)! Later historians said that Cyrus read this prophecy and was so moved that he carried it out. Isaiah also predicted that Jerusalem would fall more than 100 years before it happened (586 B.C.) and that the temple would be rebuilt about 200 years before it happened. It is clear these prophecies came from God, who alone knows the future.

## Chapter 45 Study Notes

<sup>1</sup> "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: <sup>2</sup> I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. <sup>3</sup> I 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. <sup>4</sup> For 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. <sup>5</sup> I 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, <sup>6</sup> so 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. <sup>7</sup> I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things. <sup>8</sup> "You heavens above, rain down my righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness flourish with it; I, the LORD, have created it. <sup>9</sup> "Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherd on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'The potter has no hands'? <sup>10</sup> Woe to the one who says to a father, 'What have you begotten?' or to a mother, 'What have you brought to birth?' <sup>11</sup> "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? <sup>12</sup> It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts. <sup>13</sup> 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." <sup>14</sup> This is what the LORD says: "The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabean— 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.'" <sup>15</sup> Truly you are a God who has been hiding himself, the God and Savior of Israel. <sup>16</sup> All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together. <sup>17</sup> But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> "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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the LORD and will make their boast in him.

**45:1-8** This is the only place in the Bible where a Gentile ruler is said to be "anointed." God is the power over all rulers and powers, and he anoints whom he chooses for his special tasks. Cyrus's kingdom spread across 2,000 miles (the largest of any empire then known), including the territories of both the Assyrian and the Babylonian empires. Why did God anoint Cyrus? Because God had a special task for him to do for Israel. Cyrus would allow God's city, Jerusalem, to be rebuilt, and he would set the exiles free without expecting anything in return. Few kings of Israel or Judah had done as much for God's people as Cyrus would.

**45:7** God is ruler over light and darkness, over prosperous times and times of disaster. Our lives are sprinkled with both types of experiences, and both are needed for us to grow spiritually. When good times come, thank God and use your prosperity for him. When bad times come, don't resent them, but ask what you can learn from this refining experience to make you a better servant of God.

**45:14** Cush is Ethiopia. The Sabeans were people from Seba in southern Arabia. **45:17** Until this time, Israel had anticipated temporal salvation—God would save them from their enemies. Here Isaiah tells of an everlasting salvation with God. **45:18-19** God's promises are public, and their fulfillment is sure. So why do we ever doubt him? We never have to be uncertain when we have a God of truth and righteousness. **45:22** Salvation is for all nations, not just the Israelites. Many times it seems as though Israel had an inside track on salvation. But God makes it clear that his people include all those who follow him. Israel was to be the means through which the whole world would come to know God. Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilled Israel's role and gave all people the opportunity to follow God.

## Chapter 46 Study Notes

### Gods of Babylon - Verses 1-13

<sup>1</sup>Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden. The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary. <sup>2</sup>They stoop and bow down together, unable to rescue the burden, they themselves go off into captivity. <sup>3</sup>"Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob, all the remnant of the people of Israel, you whom I have upheld since your birth, and have carried since you were born. <sup>4</sup>Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. <sup>5</sup>"With whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? <sup>6</sup>Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it. <sup>7</sup>They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Even though someone cries out to it, it cannot answer; it cannot save them from their troubles. <sup>8</sup>"Remember this, keep it in mind take it to heart, you rebels. <sup>9</sup>Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. <sup>10</sup>I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.' <sup>11</sup>From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do. <sup>12</sup>Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are now far from my righteousness. <sup>13</sup>I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel.

**46:1-4** Cyrus would carry out God's judgment against Babylon. Bel was the chief deity of the Babylonians; Nebo was the god of science and learning. These "gods," however, needed animals and people to carry them around and could not even save themselves from being taken into captivity. They had no power at all. In contrast to gods that needed to be hauled around by people, our God created us and cares for us. His love is so enduring that he will care for us throughout our lifetime and even through death. **46:8-11** Israel was tempted to waver between the Lord God and pagan gods. Isaiah affirms the sole lordship of God. God is unique in his knowledge and in his control of the future. His consistent purpose is to carry out what he has planned. When we are tempted to pursue anything that promises pleasure, comfort, peace, or security apart from God, we must remember our commitment to God. **46:13** Much of the book of Isaiah speaks of a future deliverance when we will all live with God in perfect peace. God offers not only this future hope but also help for our present needs. His righteousness is near us, and we do not have to wait for his salvation.