

The Lord, Your Redeemer

Isaiah chapters 44 and 45 are at the heart of the nine-chapter segment (40-48) on the deliverance of Israel. This section continues the parallel development of two themes: captivity will be ended by national liberation (42:18-43:21), and sin dealt with by spiritual redemption (43:22-44:23). God would make His people the proof of His deity by delivering them from captivity in Babylon (43:14-21), and from their sins (44:1-5). In tones of tender love, God assures His people that they need not fear.

Invitation to Pray: Ask God to open this portion of His Word to you. Ask Him to provide insights that will be life changing.

1. Do a quick survey of chapters 44-45 to get a feel for the interchange of themes and topics. Mark the key words and phrases. What thoughts and questions come to mind as you scan these passages?

Note: The opening words of chapters 43-44, (“but now” NIV) are significant. They are meant to guard against drawing a wrong conclusion and the feeling that the last word has been spoken. (Compare 42:25 with 43:1 and 43:25 with 44:1).

Isaiah begins this word of comfort by reminding his people once more of their true identity. **Read Isaiah 44:1-5** and review the parallel passage in 43:1-7. In these verses we hear the heartbeat of the Lord for His people.

2. What titles and phrases highlight God’s special relationship with the nation? Explore their meanings as time permits.
3. In view of Israel’s backsliding and apostasy, why does her status before God remain unchanged? (See Romans 11:29 and Deuteronomy 7:7-9.)

Amazingly, the One who “formed” Israel for Himself, will also be the source of her spiritual redemption.

4. In Isaiah, the first mention of God the “Redeemer” appears in 41:14. What other references to God the “Redeemer” do you find in chapters 43-44 _____ ?

A Closer Look

In both the Old and New Testaments, redemption involves deliverance from bondage based on the payment of a price by a redeemer. The Hebrew words used most often for redemption indicate a process by which something alienated may be recovered for its original owner. The owner/redeemer secures freedom by payment of a price. The Old Testament metaphor of redemption includes the ideas of loosing from a bond, setting free from captivity or slavery, buying back something lost or sold, and ransoming. These ideas were all woven into the social, legal and religious fabric of the nation.

When God spoke of Himself as “Israel’s King and *Redeemer*” the Jewish people would have been able to draw on many illustrations from life and history to give this term meaning (e.g. the release of Israel from Egyptian bondage). These events prepared the way for understanding the significant spiritual redemption that would come through Christ’s redeeming work on the cross.

In this section of Isaiah, the titles *Redeemer* and *Holy One of Israel* are often linked together (41:14, 43:14, 48:17, 49:7, 54:5). Sometimes *Redeemer* is paired with *Lord Almighty* (44:6 NIV) and *Mighty One* (49:26, 60:16 NIV). In Isaiah 47:4 all three titles are combined in one verse. In light of God’s redemptive purposes, what truths does this combination of names suggest?

In 44:3-5 we are given a glimpse of how God’s redemptive grace will be manifest in future generations. Study this section carefully. Consider the symbolic descriptions. For additional insights, consult Isaiah 59:21; Ezekiel 34:26; Joel 2:28-29; John 7:37-39; and Acts 2:17-21.

5. After thoughtful consideration, write your interpretation of verses 3-5.

6. How do you know God has chosen, redeemed, and promised to protect you? How do you know His promises in Isaiah apply to you (Galatians 3:7-9; Romans 4:13-25)?

In future sections, Isaiah provides more details about God's redemptive plans and purposes; but first let's **read Isaiah 44:6-22**. This section begins with a word from the mouth of the Almighty! Listen, as He contrasts His forming of the nation of Israel (vv.1-8) with the Gentiles who form their own gods (vv. 6-20).

7. a. Isaiah 44:9-20 brings the exposure of the emptiness and real truth about idolatry to a climax. What do you find so astonishing about this scene (vv. 9-17)?

b. From your reading of 44:18-20, how is this failure of human reason explained? (Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11.)

8. What steps can you take this week to insure that you are not being deceived by idolatrous patterns of thought or behavior?

9. In light of the above, what is Israel called to remember in verses 21 and 22? Also see 45:16 and 17.

In this passage, redemption is often spoken of as already complete. This is the translation of the Hebrew perfect tense verb that speaks of things in the future as though they had already happened in the past because they are certain to occur.

That a future redemption is in view becomes clear in the verses that follow. **Read Isaiah 44:23-45:25**. Note how the Lord prefaced His stunning predictions in this passage with reminders of who was making them. (See 44:24, 45:1, 5, 6, 11, 14, 18 and 21.)

10. a. What remarkable claims does God make about Himself in 44:24? In 44:25-26a?

b. How do these truths confirm the promises given in 44:26b-28?

The mysterious personage, whose coming has been foretold (41:2-4, 25), is now mentioned by name. This remarkable prediction about Cyrus was made more than 150 years before it came to pass. Isaiah's hearers probably said to one another, "Who did he say would do this? Who is Cyrus?"

11. According to 45:1-8, what will God do for Cyrus?

Cyrus the Great founded the vast Persian Empire in 549 B. C. (See the Timeline.) When Cyrus overthrew the Babylonian regime in 539 B. C. he reversed the inhumane policy of displacing whole populations, as practiced by Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors.

12. In what sense was the unbelieving Cyrus a "shepherd" and the Lord's "anointed" servant (44:28, 45:1)?

13. a. Why do you think God chose a pagan emperor to deliver His chosen people from Babylonian captivity (45:4c)? Recall especially chapters 40-45.

b. Apparently some people objected to Isaiah's declaration that God would use a pagan as the means of deliverance (45:9-10). How does God refute this objection (45:11-13)?

In this exciting period Isaiah lifted the meaning of these events from the level of political history to the level of understanding world history as a drama of redemption. God's use of Cyrus preserved the Israelites and thus made the incarnation possible. That event, in turn, has made salvation available to the whole world.

14. Isaiah 45:22 not only shows the simplicity of salvation, but that even the deluded idolaters of the Gentiles will yet be invited to participate in the salvation of the Lord.

a. What are these foreigners summoned to do? (Compare Romans 10:9-13.)

b. In verse 23 the Lord supports His invitation with a solemn oath. What does He declare will happen (vv. 23-25)?

- c. How do verses 22-25 form the backdrop for Philippians 2:10-11?
15. a. Do you think God still shapes all of history around the purpose of saving His people?
What are the implications of saying yes to that? Of saying no?
- b. What current event especially disturbs you because you cannot see any sense in it?
How might this passage change your perspective of this event (44:7)?

To sum up: God's role as Redeemer emphasizes His holy power over sin and evil, as well as His ability to bring about the salvation of men and women. In His grace God brings redemption to us in our helpless condition. Through the process of redemption we are freed to be all that He intended us to be. This process is often expressed in terms like these: We *have* been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, we *are* being saved from the power of sin, and we *will* ultimately be saved from the very presence of sin.

Christians are a community of people who have been redeemed, but we are also a community experiencing further deliverance as a part of God's ongoing work in our lives.

16. Have you made spiritual progress lately? What areas of your life need to be exposed to God's holy redeeming power?

-In prayer, ask God to do a new thing in your life! Allow His redemptive grace to produce new habits of holiness—habits that reflect the glory of His holy character.

-As you finish up, remember: every tiny bit of your life that has value, you owe to the redemption of Jesus Christ.