

God's Sovereign Grace for Israel and the Nations

Isaiah 45:14-25

Isaiah 45:14-17 – *“Thus says the Lord: “The labor of Egypt and merchandise of Cush and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you, and they shall be yours. They shall walk behind you; they shall come over in chains; and they shall bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying, ‘Surely God is in you, and there is no other. There is no other God.’”*

¹⁵ *Truly You are God, who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior!*

¹⁶ *They shall be ashamed and also disgraced, all of them. They shall go in confusion together, who are makers of idols.*

¹⁷ *But Israel shall be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation. You shall not be ashamed or disgraced forever and ever.”*

Background Notes

The first half of Isaiah 45 emphasized the sovereignty of God in all of His works and in all of His ways. Nothing happens that God does not allow. God has complete control and authority over everything! God *“works all things after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11)*.

The unbeliever does not like this truth - in fact, many unbelievers *hate* this truth. They don't like the idea that they're not in ultimate control of their own lives. Even some believers have a hard time with this truth. But I love this truth! I'm so glad that *“there are **no maverick molecules** on this earth or in this universe!”* Knowing that ultimately God controls everything and calls all the shots is a great blessing.

Why did Isaiah emphasize this great truth about the sovereignty of God? In view of the overall context of this section of Isaiah, there were two reasons for this emphasis:

- a. A continuing contrast was being made between the all-powerful and all-knowing God of Israel, and the inability and insufficiency of the foreign gods - whose idols were embraced by many in Israel.

- b. In His sovereign grace, God had redemptive plans and purposes for His people, Israel. The prophet Isaiah wanted to emphasize that **nothing** could thwart God's plans and purposes. The announcement of God's redemptive plans for Israel was made in chapter 44. At the end of chapter 44 and the beginning of chapter 45, that amazing prophecy was given about Cyrus, the Persian emperor. Cyrus would be God's instrument in accomplishing His sovereign overall plans for the redemption of Israel.

The second half of Isaiah 45 included more details of God's sovereign redemptive plans and purposes for Israel. The emphasis was on the character of God who would save Israel.

Doctrinal Points

1. God's sovereign grace is evident in His plan of salvation for Israel.

Verse 14: *"Thus says the Lord: "The labor of Egypt and merchandise of Cush and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you, and they shall be yours. They shall walk behind you, they shall come over in chains; and they shall bow down to you. They will make supplication to you, saying, 'Surely God is in you, and there is no other. There is no other God.'"*

Verse 14 looks on to the time when God's sovereign salvation for Israel will be complete. When the Lord returns and establishes His earthly kingdom, all nations will acknowledge the supremacy of Israel, and all will reverence the God of Israel - the one true God.

"Truly You are God, who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior! (v15). The point of verse 15 about God "hiding" Himself seems to be two-fold. First, in contrast to the visible idols of the foreign gods, the true God, the Savior of Israel, is invisible. And second, the Lord's sovereign acts were not obvious to everyone - but He gives insight into what He has revealed to believers.

For example, some of you have read Joel Rosenberg's books about the End Times. Most of them are fictional, or novels, but many people (including some big names in the media today) are referring to him as a modern-day prophet. Joel Rosenberg admits that he is not a prophet; he is just an evangelical Christian with a high view of the prophetic Scriptures. The End-Time scenarios of his novels (like the Ezekiel Option) are based on his insight into the prophetic Scriptures, which are available to all, but are hidden in meaning to most people.

Isaiah 45:16-17 - *"They shall be ashamed and also disgraced, all of them. They shall go in confusion together, who are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation. You shall not be ashamed or disgraced forever and ever."*

Verses 16-17 show that all other gods and their followers will be humiliated forever, because Israel's salvation will be Exhibit "A" of God's sovereign power and grace.

Isaiah 45:18 - *"For thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited. "I am the Lord, and there is no other."*

Various commentators have written quite a lot about verse 18, because the word “in vain” is the same word that is translated “empty” or “void” or a “waste place” in Genesis 1:2 (“*and the earth was without form and void,*” or “*empty*”). So some students of Scripture have used this verse as support for the so-called “gap theory.” The “gap theory” holds that Genesis 1:1 described a supposed “original perfect creation” that was not formless and empty. But then Genesis 1:2 described the chaotic, formless state that came about in the heavens and earth because of the fall of Satan. Then, after a chaotic “gap” period (that lasted for whatever number of years you want to put in it), the **re-creation** or reconstruction of the heavens and earth began in Genesis 1:3, when God said “*Let there be light.*”

So the question about Isaiah 45:18 is: What was the intent of the author of the passage? Did it describe the actual process, or just describe the purpose? When it says, “*Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited,*” was that a description of the heavens and earth *before* the supposed gap period (in the overall process of bringing about the finished heavens and earth), or was it describing God’s purpose in creating the heavens and earth?

In view of the context, I think that the author’s point was that the earth was not created to just be an empty material universe. No! The earth was specifically and purposefully and wonderfully designed, to be inhabited by mankind whom He created in the image of God.

Isaiah 45:19 - “*I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, ‘Seek Me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak righteousness. I declare things that are right.*” In verse 19 the Lord emphasized that He has not hidden this truth about His righteous plans and purposes from His people.

God’s sovereign grace is evident in His plan of salvation for Israel.

2. God’s sovereign grace is evident in His plan of salvation for all people.

Isaiah 45:20-21 - “*Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near together, you who have escaped from the nations. They have no knowledge, who carry the wood of their carved image, and pray to a god that cannot save. Tell and bring forth your case. Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me.*”

In verses 20-21, once again the ignorant and dead wooden idols, that had to be carried because they couldn’t even move, were contrasted with the one true and living God, who is all-knowing and can announce the future. The “this” of verse 21 is probably the long-range prophecy of the coming of Cyrus, who was predicted by name at the end of chapter 44 and the beginning of chapter 45. Not only can the God of Israel make long-range predictions, but He is also righteous - and He can save anyone on the earth who will turn to him.

Isaiah 45:21-25 - *"A just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me. ²² "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.*

²³ I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall take an oath.

²⁴ He shall say, 'Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him.

²⁵ In the Lord all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory."

Anyone who says that the Old Testament is about salvation for Israel only has not read the Old Testament! We see here that all the world will be accountable to God. And we see here that everyone will ultimately bow the knee and acknowledge God (see also Romans 14 and Philippians 2 - where verse 23 here is quoted). But the main point here is that by God's grace, **salvation is available to all mankind!** Aren't you glad?

Before God's program for mankind is over, even many people who were angry with God (v24) and many Jewish people (v25), will be saved and justified, and they will all bring glory to God!

God's sovereign grace is evident in His plan of salvation for all people.

Practical Application

Challenge the unbelieving world to "Set forth your case!"

There's an excellent little book on Christian apologetics by Clark Pinnock, entitled "Set Forth Your Case." The title is taken from verse 21 (and from Isaiah 41:21), where the false gods were challenged to go up against the one true God of Israel with their claims, and their proofs, and their evidence.

The same is true today. God would challenge the unbelieving world: "Set forth your case!" Where is your evidence for how you say this world began? Where is your proof that life can start by itself? Where is your documentation that evolution can produce new genetic information? How do you explain the fact that there is extraordinarily detailed design in this universe? What about the fact that people can think and reason and appreciate beauty, and that they have a moral conscience? Is that just coincidence? Did it just come about by random chance?

Challenge the unbelieving world to set forth their case!