

Isaiah's Book of Consolation (Isaiah 40-55)
(#10) The Redemption and Restoration of Israel from Babylon (cont.) (44:1-8)

(Because our weekly outline of Isaiah 40-55 is growing too lengthy,
it is now placed at the end of these notes.)

Introduction

Let us turn to Isaiah 44. Before we delve into the meaning and significance of this passage, I would like to underscore for us how we understand the prophecies regarding Israel in exile and their return to the Lord. In contrast to most interpreters, who view many of the prophecies in this portion of Isaiah to be prophetic of an end time return of Jews to the land of Israel and the 1,000 year Jewish millennium that is said to follow, we, or rather I, as many who are Reformed in their theology, understand these oracles to be prophetic of the salvation that God has brought to His people through Jesus Christ to His people, the church, the Israel of God, in this present church age. Let me underscore our understanding of these matters.

We have considered this portion of Isaiah's prophecy in its historical and literary context. Although Isaiah had originally drafted his prophecy in the 8th century BC, these chapters were directed to the Jewish exiles of the 6th century BC, who were dwelling in Babylon. The Babylonians had taken them there upon the destruction of Judah with its capital city, Jerusalem, and the temple that had been built by Solomon four centuries before. This prophecy of Isaiah 40 through 55, commonly known as the "Book of Consolation", is a prophecy of God's intention to deliver His people from Babylon, enabling their return to the land, where at a time in the future God would send to them a Savior, who would take away God's curse from them, restoring them to covenant relationship with God. Isaiah also revealed that Gentiles would join these Jewish pilgrims in their journey to their homeland. This was a great salvation event, likened unto a second Exodus, much like when God first delivered His people Israel from Egypt, enabled their journey through the wilderness and their final entrance into the Promised Land.

We have also showed how this historic return of the Jews from Babylon to their homeland, and particularly Jerusalem, the city of God, is a historical illustration, even a prophetic emblem of this church age, in which God brings His people through this fallen world, when they are gathered into His presence to receive and enjoy their full and final salvation. Just as God called forth His chosen and preserved remnant of Jews from Babylon and then enabled their successful pilgrimage return to Jerusalem, so God calls His people, both Jews and Gentiles, to place their faith in Jesus Christ so that they may be forgiven of their sins. The Lord then directs them to come forth in repentance out of "Babylon", turning away from this fallen world system, as they (we) journey in a spiritual pilgrimage of faith unto our heavenly Zion.

We can see this theme also conveyed through the New Testament Scriptures. We showed last Lord's Day that our Lord spoke of His own "*Exodus*", which was His death on the cross, in which He would depart from this fallen world to return to His Father. We also read that this Christian life is that of God calling forth His people to repent, even "flee" this condemned world, to depart through faith and make a pilgrimage unto Zion, the heavenly city of God. We read of this idea also in 1 Peter 2:9ff:

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹Beloved, I urge you *as sojourners and exiles* to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

There are other ways that the New Testament reveals an association between the Old Testament historic event of the return of pilgrims to Zion and the salvation that is through Jesus Christ. For example, we read in Acts 2 of the Jews from many nations of the world, who had traveled to Jerusalem (to keep the Passover), where they heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and were converted unto Him. We read in **Acts 2:5-11** of these nations from which God’s people have journeyed.

⁵Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians--we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

Here is the note from the ESV Study Bible about these “nations”:

The long list of nations covers most of the first-century Roman world, particularly where Jewish communities existed. It provides one of the most comprehensive ancient catalogs of the Jewish Diaspora (Jews living outside of Palestine) and is confirmed by other ancient lists (esp. Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 281-284), by early Jewish archeological remains, and by many ancient literary sources. It is only natural that first century Jerusalem would be filled with devout Jews “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). The list also demonstrates that already at Pentecost the Christians were starting their worldwide witness. At this point the converts were mainly Jewish. The only Gentiles at Pentecost were proselytes (v. 11), Gentiles who had become full converts to Judaism.¹

And so, at Pentecost, Jews of the Diaspora, that is, those Jews who had been exiled into the Gentile world, had traveled to “Jerusalem”, and there heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and were converted unto Him.

We might also consider the reference of **James 1:1**, which reads, “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are *scattered abroad*: Greetings” (NKJV). The English Standard Version (ESV) expresses it more clearly: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the *Dispersion*: Greetings.” We see that James was writing to Christians, who could be identified as members of “Israel”, the “twelve tribes”, but they were in the Roman world. But these true Jews, that is, true Christians (cf. Rom. 2:29), were yet of the Dispersion, scattered in the Gentile world that God was drawing back unto Himself through faith in Jesus Christ. We might again cite a footnote in the *ESV Study Bible*, which makes the same assertion that we are making regarding the New Testament Church being the Israel of God, scattered throughout the world, but which is returning to God through faith in Jesus Christ. Here is the note on the opening words of James 1:1:

Jesus chose 12 disciples to signify the **twelve tribes** and thus to identify the church as the new Israel (see note on Matthew 10:1). James reminds these Jewish Christians of their spiritual heritage as the people of god, gathered by Jesus the Messiah. **In the Dispersion**. The tribes of Israel were scattered throughout the world by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. They looked forward to being regathered as a people (Jer. 31:7-14; Ezek. 37:15-28). James implies that the true Israel is now also dispersed (away from its heavenly homeland) and oppressed, but assured of their final gathering to the Lord.²

We may also consider the opening words of 1 Peter. We read in **1 Peter 1:1 and 2:**

¹ *ESV Study Bible* (Crossway Bibles, 2007), p. 2083.

² *Ibid*, p. 2391.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of *the Dispersion* in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (NKJV)

But again, the ESV expresses it more clearly:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect *exiles of the dispersion* in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (ESV)

The footnote in the ESV on this text expresses well the understanding that we are espousing:

Peter designates himself as an **apostle**, an authoritative messenger of Jesus Christ (see note on Rom. 1:1). The people receiving his letter are **elect exiles of the dispersion**. Peter is not speaking of a literal exile (cf. 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11). Believers long for their true home in the new world that is coming and for their end time inheritance, for they do not conform to the values and worldviews of this present evil age. Believers are not only exiles but God’s “elect exiles.” They are His chosen people, just as Israel is designated as God’s chosen people in the OT (Deut. 4:37; 7:68; Psa. 106:5; Isa. 43:20; 45:4). Since the recipients of his letter were primarily Gentiles, Peter explicitly teaches that the church of Jesus Christ is the new Israel—God’s new chosen people. “Dispersion” (Greek, *Diaspora*) points to the same truth. It is typically used to describe the scattering of the Jews throughout the world (Deut. 28:25; 30:4; Neh. 1:9; Psa. 147:2; Isa. 49:6; Jer. 15:7; 41:17; cf. also John 7:35; James 1:1; note on Acts 2:9-11), but Peter sees a parallel in the church being dispersed throughout the world.³

Lastly, let us consider several verses in 1 Peter that speak to Christians as ones being in “exile”, just as the Jewish survivors of God’s judgment upon Israel and Judah, whom He sent into bondage in Babylon, but were waiting for their release and restoration unto God through the promised, coming Messiah. **1 Peter 1:17-19** reads,

And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout *the time of your exile*, ¹⁸knowing that you were *ransomed* from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but *with the precious blood of Christ*, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Here we see that Gentile Christians, to whom Peter principally wrote this epistle, are presently “in exile”, as were the elect Jews in Babylon, and that these Christians were “ransomed”, in other words, “redeemed”, just as God had promised to redeem His people from exile among the nations, Babylon being the chief.⁴

Let us now return to Isaiah 44 and continue our examination of these prophecies in this Book of Consolation.

Last Lord’s day we considered most of Isaiah 43 in which we read of God’s promise to redeem and restore Israel from Babylon. We stopped at the end of chapter 43, verse 28. But actually this section of the

³ Ibid, p. 2405. There was probably a differing opinion among the editors of this study Bible for an alternative view is also noted, which reads, “Another view is that these verses show the church is *like* Israel but that the ultimate fulfilment of these OT prophecies pertains mainly to future ethnic Israel rather than to the church; this also applies to the notes on 1 Peter 1:22-2:10; 2:9; 2:10.” I disagree with this view. It stems from a refusal to see the “Israel” to whom the blessings of salvation are ones who are spiritually circumcised of the heart (regenerated), whether they are Jews or Gentiles, not because they are physically circumcised, natural born physical descendants of Abraham.

⁴ Cf. Isaiah 43:1; 44:22f.

prophecy, which began with 43:14, continues through the first 8 verses of chapter 44. And so, let us pick up where we left off, and consider Isaiah 44:1-8.

J. The Redemption and Restoration of Israel from Babylon (43:14-44:8)

Let us read the verses before us, Isaiah 44:1-8.

¹“Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant,
And Israel whom I have chosen.
²Thus says the LORD who made you
And formed you from the womb, who will help you:
‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant;
And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.
³For I will pour water on him who is thirsty,
And floods on the dry ground;
I will pour My Spirit on your descendants,
And My blessing on your offspring;
⁴They will spring up among the grass
Like willows by the watercourses.’
⁵One will say, ‘I am the LORD’s’;
Another will call himself by the name of Jacob;
Another will write with his hand, ‘The LORD’s,’
And name himself by the name of Israel.

⁶“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
‘I am the First and I am the Last;
Besides Me there is no God.
⁷And who can proclaim as I do?
Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me,
Since I appointed the ancient people.
And the things that are coming and shall come,
Let them show these to them.
⁸Do not fear, nor be afraid;
Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?
You are My witnesses.
Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed there is no other Rock;
I know not one.’”

We continue to read of God’s promise to the Jewish exiles in Babylon of God’s intention to restore His people unto Himself and enable their return to their homeland. These were needy, helpless, people, ones wholly in need of God to intervene on their behalf. To them God’s Word comes through His prophet to give them faith and hope in their God.

We read in **verse 1** of God’s promise of blessing. ***“Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, and Israel whom I have chosen.”***

God had just concluded denouncing the sins of Israel, as He has done repeatedly in this prophesy; but quickly following on His rebukes are His promises. Why would He be kind and tender-hearted toward them? It is because they were the objects of His choice.

So it is with all of His people. It is so with you and me, if indeed we belong to Him. We are the objects of His favor, not because we are entitled to it, or deserve it, but because He has purposed that we would be the objects of His favor by His free grace.

This first stanza of poetry in this section refers to His people as “Jacob.” Notice that is in synonymous parallelism with “Israel.” Similarly the term “servant” in the first line is parallel with “chosen.” God chooses whom He purposes to have them serve Him.

We then read in **verse 2**:

*Thus says the LORD who made you
And formed you from the womb, who will help you:
'Fear not, O Jacob My servant;
And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.*

God has Israel recall his beginnings. Before Israel knew God, God had known Israel; He had foreknown Israel, and had made him his choice. Israel owed his birth and development, his entire existence, to the working of God before he (Israel) knew of God. God says, therefore, “Do not fear.” God encourages His people based on He having elected them, the fact that they are the objects of His choice.

Now we could go back that far with regard to each of us as God's children. For what was true of Israel is true for every child of God. God had designs on you, and He has superintended your existence. He caused you to be conceived, born, develop to maturity. He has had angels at your attendance, leading and preserving you to the very day that he purposed to reveal Christ in you.

When God addressed Israel directly, He addressed him in endearing terms. “Jeshurun” is a poetic term, which means “dearest upright one.” And so, we see that in order to alleviate their fears, God addressed His people with the tenderest of terms.

God then stated what He would do for His people in **verses 3 through 5**:

*³For I will pour water on him who is thirsty,
And floods on the dry ground;
I will pour My Spirit on your descendants,
And My blessing on your offspring;
⁴They will spring up among the grass
Like willows by the watercourses.'
⁵One will say, 'I am the LORD's';
Another will call himself by the name of Jacob;
Another will write with his hand, 'The LORD's,'
And name himself by the name of Israel.*

God tells Israel what form His blessing will take: “***For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground.***” God likens His people to a dry and thirsty land that is need of much water so as to foster and support life. And He is able to provide this needed life-giver. By this metaphor God insures that He will give life to His barren people. When we, the Lord's people, are brought to the point of our greatest distress, and see no reason for hope, God comes to us with the promise of a bestowal of life, and with it an invigoration of life.

Notice the “water” that God pours upon His people is in poetic parallel with the Holy “Spirit.” This describes God the Holy Spirit in His ability to bring forth life where there is currently death. Of course it is the Holy Spirit who alone can give life. Again, here we read that the “Spirit” is in parallel with “water”; without the Spirit all things decay and perish through drought.

This was a promise which was largely fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The pouring out of the Spirit was the proof of the fact that God had raised Jesus from the dead and had exalted Him to His own right hand, to sit on his throne in glory. Christ's first act was to give forth the life-giving Spirit to His church. The Spirit descended and has remained with her. He is permanently resident in the midst of the church. It was as flowing, life-giving water, the blessed Holy Spirit by which the Lord enlivened His church. Our Lord taught this to His disciples. We read in **John 7:37-39**.

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Now, even though we live in the days of fulfilment of this blessing, there are times when the people of God become “dry” and “barren.” They need a fresh effusion of the blessed Holy Spirit to enliven them with joy, peace, love, and power to accomplish the work of God. In these times of barrenness God's people may pray for fresh outpourings of spiritual blessing, as those in a drought pray for life-giving rain to fall from heaven. This is not praying for a baptism of the Spirit, but it is praying for the Lord Jesus to give us a fresh bestowal of the Spirit. Our Lord Jesus taught this in **Luke 11:5-8**.

⁹And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹²or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Now again, one may be born again, possess the Spirit of God, or rather be possessed of the Spirit of God, yet seem to be void of His life-giving influences. The Lord spoke of the Spirit's life-giving operations as wells of water springing up from within you as a well gives up water (John 4). But elsewhere the Spirit's operations are likened to rain poured out on dry ground, as we have here (cf. Isa. 32:9-16). I fear that we have become so fearful of getting what charismatics purport to have that we have shied away from these notions. But long before the modern charismatics came along, the Reformers and the Puritans and later, the children of revivals, spoke in terms of the Spirit being poured out upon them, or having fallen upon them, or God having baptized them afresh with the Spirit. Let us not allow charismatic error to rob us of our spiritual birthright and pressing need, that being the need of the Spirit of God to be poured out on us afresh as “water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground.” When the Spirit moves about us there is a quickening that occurs. God is a quickening (life-giving) Spirit. When He is present, He testifies of Christ's presence, and life results.

Now, even though we live in the days of fulfilment of this blessing, there are times when the people of God become “dry” and “barren.” They need a fresh effusion of the blessed Holy Spirit to enliven them with joy, peace, love, and power to accomplish the work of God. In these times of barrenness God's people may pray for fresh outpourings of spiritual blessing, as those in a drought pray for life-giving rain to fall from heaven. This is not praying for a baptism of the Spirit, but it is praying for the Lord Jesus to give us a fresh bestowal of the Spirit. Our Lord Jesus taught this in **Luke 11:9-13**.

⁹And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹²or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Sadly this need for praying for the Holy Spirit has been lost to most evangelicals. They have been taught that to pray for the Holy Spirit was something that believers did before Pentecost. In Scofield's Study Bible he gave this footnote on Luke 11:13, which again reads, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

“To the Jew this promise was undoubtedly new and staggering, for it indicates that in advance to the fulfilment of Joel 2:28-29, all might receive the Holy Spirit. It should be kept in mind, however, that in accordance with the promise, as recorded in Luke 24:49; John 7:38-39; 14:16-17; Acts 1:4-5, and with the historic fact stated in Romans 8:9, 15; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 2:20-27, for the Christian to go back to Luke 11:13 is to forget Pentecost and to ignore the truth that now every believer has the indwelling Spirit.”⁵

In other words, according to this position this promise to pray for the Holy Spirit does not apply to the New Testament Christian. This is the predominant position of evangelical Christians who are not of the charismatic persuasion. But this is a wrong interpretation. Consider how the Puritans and the great men of the Reformed faith viewed this privilege and necessity of praying for the Holy Spirit. Here is a rather lengthy reading from a book written by **D. Martin Lloyd-Jones**, *The Puritans*:

Very well then; let us pledge ourselves to pray for an outpouring of the Spirit of God, and let me put the appeal to you do so first of all in these words taken from Smeaton. ‘As to the peculiar mode of praying, we may say that in every season of general awakening the Christian community waits just as they waited for the effusion of the Spirit, with one accord in prayer and supplication in the interval between the Ascension and Pentecost. No other course has been prescribed; and the church of the present has all the warrant she ever had to wait, expect, and pray. The first disciples waited in the youthfulness of simple hope, not for a spirit which they had not, but for more of the Spirit which they had; and Christianity has not outlived itself. Ten days they waited with one accord in prayer, when of a sudden the Spirit came to give them spiritual eyes to apprehend divine things as they never knew them before, and to impart a joy which no man could take from them. It was prayer in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18) and prayer for the Spirit, the great “promise of the Father.” But the prayer that brought down the Holy Ghost was not the style of petition which ceases if it is not heard at once, or if the heart is out of tune. The prayer which prevails with Him who gives the Spirit is that which will not let Him go without the blessing. When the spirit of extraordinary supplication is poured out from on high—when urgent desire is cherished for the Holy Ghost—when the church asks according to God’s riches in glory, and expects such great things as God’s promises warrant and Christ’s merits can procure—the time to favour Zion, the set time, is come (Psa. 102:16-18). When we look at the prayers in Scripture, we find that God’s glory, the church’s growth and welfare, her holiness and progress, were ever higher in the thoughts and breathings of the saints than personal considerations. And if we are animated with any other frame of mind, it is not prayer taught by the Spirit, nor offered up in the Name of Christ. The prayer attitude of the church in the first days after the Ascension, when the disciples waited for the Spirit, should be the church’s attitude still. I need not refer to the copious references of the Apostles to the urgent duty of praying “in the Spirit” and praying “for the Spirit”, nor shall I refer at large to the habits of all true labourers, such as Luther, Welsh, Whitefield, and others, in proof of the great truth that prayer is the main work of the ministry. And no more mischievous and misleading theory could be propounded, nor any one more dishonouring to the Holy Spirit, than the principle adopted by the Plymouth Brethren, that because the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, the church has no need, and no warrant, to pray any more for the effusion of the Spirit of God. On the contrary, the more the church asks the Spirit and waits for His communication, the more she receives. The prayer of faith in one incessant cry comes up from the earth in support of the efforts put forth for the conversion of a people ready to perish. This prayer goes before and follows after all the calls to repentance.’

There is nothing better that one can do, therefore, in the light of that, than to suggest the urgent call that comes to us at this moment is to offer unceasingly the prayer that was offered up by Isaiah in the terrible day in which he found himself living. Listen:

⁵ C. I. Scofield, ed., *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 1097. This note was in the original *Scofield Reference Bible* of 1909 and 1917. It is also in this edition of *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, which was published in 1967.

‘Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory: where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained? ¹⁶Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O LORD, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting. ¹⁷O LORD, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear? Return for Thy servants’ sake, the tribes of Thine inheritance. ¹⁸The people of Thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary. ¹⁹We are Thine: Thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by Thy name.’

And then, having asked God to look down, he goes further--

‘Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence, ²As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence! ³When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence. ⁴For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him. ⁵Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in Thy ways: behold, Thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. ⁶But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. ⁷And there is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee: for Thou hast hid Thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. ⁸But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand. (Isa. 63:15 – 64:8, KJV)

How many of us have stirred ourselves up to take hold of God? How many? This is typical biblical teaching, this was also the teaching of our fathers. They waited upon God and cried and cried until He did rend the heavens and come down. Let us lay hold upon Him and plead with Him to vindicate His own truth and the doctrines which are so dear to our hearts, that the church may be revived and masses of people may be served.⁶

Now, back in Isaiah 44:3, we can read to whom God gave this promise? It reads, “***I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants.***” All of God’s children may partake of this blessing.⁷ What results? We read in **44:4** and **5**:

⁴They will spring up among the grass
Like willows by the watercourses.’
⁵One will say, ‘I am the LORD’s’;
Another will call himself by the name of Jacob;
Another will write with his hand, ‘The LORD’s,’
And name himself by the name of Israel.

And so we, too, will see a great enlargement of our numbers, as new-born spiritual children swell our ranks and proclaim with us, “I am the LORD’s”, desiring to be numbered among God’s people, seeking their honor and His glory. May God soon bring these blessings to be seen among us.

We next read in **Isaiah 44:6** through **8** of **an announcement of God’s greatness over against idols.**

⁶ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans; Their Origins and Successors* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), pp. 20-23.

⁷ Consider the promise of Luke 11:5-13, and of Acts 2:38-39; 4:29-33.

⁶“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
 And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
 ‘I am the First and I am the Last;
 Besides Me there is no God.
⁷And who can proclaim as I do?
 Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me,
 Since I appointed the ancient people.
 And the things that are coming and shall come,
 Let them show these to them.
⁸Do not fear, nor be afraid;
 Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?
 You are My witnesses.
 Is there a God besides Me?
 Indeed there is no other Rock;
 I know not one.’”

So as to encourage His people, God speaks with respect to Himself. But before He speaks, the prophet identifies Him by several common names. **First**, He is “the LORD”, meaning *Yahweh* or commonly referred to as *Jehovah*. This is the personal name of God. It is most commonly associated with the covenant relationship that He has with His people. Its use signifies God’s relationship and commitment to His people who call upon Him by His name.

Second, God calls Himself the “*King of Israel*.” This speaks of His role of Protector and Deliverer of Israel, His nation. God has always been King, the Sovereign Ruler over the world and more particularly His people.

Third, He is Israel’s “*Redeemer*.” This describes the fact that He had purchased them from slavery to other peoples and caused them to become a people in their own right. He had redeemed them from Egypt to come into the land to be His people.

And **fourth**, last, He is the “*the LORD of hosts*”, which depicts His power to bring whatever to pass that He purposes to do.

After the prophet described God, the prophet recorded God’s own words: “*I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.*” Not only is He the great God as He is described by His names, but He has no rivals. No power is equal to Him. No power exists, nor has existed or will exist, which can thwart Him. God has never been taken by surprise, out-witted, or defeated, or even resisted so as to hinder Him with respect to His workings. He is the only God who ever was or will be.

And then God makes the appeal in **verse 7**:

*And who can proclaim as I do?
 Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me,
 Since I appointed the ancient people.
 And the things that are coming and shall come,
 Let them show these to them.*

God gave forth a challenge. It is actually a direct challenge to idols—false gods. But since there are no such things as other gods, it is an indirect challenge to all idolaters, who believe in and worship a god or gods that do not exist. Now we see that the reference to idols is veiled in this verse, but that this is in view is expressed overtly a little farther in the passage. God is setting forth a challenge to idols. They are addressed as if they existed and are challenged to make themselves known and to recount any event which they had predicted would come to pass and caused to come to pass. Jehovah had done these things with respect to Israel.

We then read in **verse 8**,

***⁸Do not fear, nor be afraid;
Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?
You are My witnesses.
Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed there is no other Rock;
I know not one.”***

The false gods did not really exist, but they were addressed for the benefit and comfort of His people. Here His people are encouraged to trust Him and not to be afraid of anything that has threatened them or of people that may seem to sway power over them. And besides, there is no one else Who is strong, as say a rock is strong, to depend upon. Their God is all that there is. And this God is for them. They may take comfort in this knowledge.

Outline of Isaiah 40-66

SECTION THREE: ORACLES OF REDEMPTION AND CONSUMMATION

- I. The Book of the Consolation of Israel (Chs. 40-55)
 - A. 40:1-11 The Prophet is to Announce God’s Coming
 - B. 40:12-31 The Creator of the Universe
 - C. 41:1-29 God Promises to Deliver His People from Babylon
 - D. 42:1-9 The First Servant Song
 - E. 42:10-13 Sing to the Lord a New Song
 - F. 42:14-17 God declares His resolve to battle on behalf of His people
 - G. 42:18-25 Israel, the Blind and Deaf Servant of God
 - H. 43:1-7 God’s Commitment to Save His People by His Grace (43:1-7)
 - I. 43:8-13 The Servant Israel is the Lord’s Witness
 - J. 43:14-44:8 The Redemption and Restoration of Israel from Babylon

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 25)