

July 20th 2014: Isaiah 45 #2: v9-12,18-21: OUR CREATOR GOD

I am very conscious when I come to a passage such as Isaiah 45, that many of the words we are looking at are directly the words of Almighty God Himself. Here we find God talking to Cyrus, and to His people Israel, and also to believers such as us. An amazing fact that should cause us to tremble a little, and to focus with an intensity that is worthy of the God who stoops to speak to us, on the message He gives about Himself.

For the message God wants us to hear from this chapter of Scripture is about His Sovereignty. About His control of all things and of all people.

So, as we saw last Sunday, He shows us how completely He was in control of a mighty world leader such as Cyrus the great. Using him as a pawn in His great plan to bring salvation to this world through His Son.

He reveals Himself in charge of His people, even in their difficult days of disaster when they wondered whether He had finally abandoned them because of their sin. Yet He was still there in charge of their present and their future. Hiding Himself from them for the sake of the purification they needed as a nation. Revealing little by little His plan to one day return them to their own land. To become once more a nation in which the Saviour of the world would be born.

As Isaiah says in v15 as he speaks about God's relationship with His people in exile: **"Truly you are a God who hides Himself, O God and Saviour of Israel"**. Thus giving us a reference back to what God said to Moses way back in Deuteronomy 31:16-18

And the LORD said to Moses: "You are going to rest with your ancestors, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. And in that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and calamities will come on them, and in that day they will ask, 'Have not these disasters come on us because our God is not with us?' And I will certainly hide my face in that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.

Such is God's sovereignty over His people. Such is His control.

And especially in this chapter He shows Himself as Sovereign over all peoples and all nations because He alone is the Creator and therefore He alone is God. He is in charge of this world and this universe and all people in it and part of it, for He made it and humanity within it.

There are several places in the Bible where we find God declaring to humankind His status as Creator and demanding from them a recognition of this fact. The most well known occasion would have to be when He spoke to Job. Job had been having this spirited debate with God as much as with his friends, and questioning God's actions against him. And at the end of His speech Job challenges God in 31:35-37:

***("Oh, that I had someone to hear me!
I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me;
let my accuser put his indictment in writing.
Surely I would wear it on my shoulder,
I would put it on like a crown.
I would give him an account of my every step;
I would present it to him as to a ruler.)—***

Then in 38:1-4 God answers Job, and He does so as Creator.

Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

***"Who is this that obscures my plans
with words without knowledge?
Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.
"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?
Tell me, if you understand.***

The message is clear. I am your creator and creator of all you see, says God. You are beholden to me for all things, not me to you. And that same thought runs through Isaiah 45. Look at the verses which commenced our reading today....45:9-12 (CEV)

**Israel, you have no right
to argue with your Creator.
You are merely a clay pot
shaped by a potter.**

**The clay doesn't ask,
"Why did you make me this way?
Where are the handles?"
Children don't have the right
to demand of their parents,
"What have you done
to make us what we are?"
I am the LORD, the Creator,
the holy God of Israel.
Do you dare question me
about my own nation
or about what I have done?
I created the world
and covered it with people;
I stretched out the sky
and filled it with stars.**

God is simply stating here that the whole creation declares the truth of His right to be Sovereign over all things, for what He has created is beyond the ability of any other god, person or power.

And of all things He could have mentioned to back up this claim God especially refers to the heavens above us and the starry hosts that we see there. The NIV puts v12 in the following way:-

***My own hands stretched out the heavens;
I marshaled their starry hosts.***

The idea of stretching out gives the impression of bigness. Of huge length and depth. This is the heavens that v18 proclaims as created by the Lord. And within them God marshaled the starry hosts, and it's a word that means to command in the sense of placing them in their ordered place or sphere. There is nothing haphazard about our universe and its very size and order proclaims the greatness of our God.

Francis Chan in his book crazy love, directs his readers to the following brief video.....

He then goes on to ask:

"Why would God create more than 350,000,000,000(350 billion) galaxies that generations of people never saw or even know existed? Do you think maybe it was to make us say, 'Wow, God is unfathomably big'? Or perhaps

God wanted us to see these pictures so that our response would be, 'Who do I think I am?'"

R. C. Sproul writes, "Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God."

Isaiah 45:18-20 says:

***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.
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.
"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.***

His people had forgotten that and had made gods out of wood and stone which they dared to worship instead of or, and this was even worse, alongside Him. That was inexcusable.

For that, God subjected them to the punishment of exile. But then He used Cyrus to send them back to their own land, and they returned a people who were deeply committed to worshipping one God and one God alone.

The lesson they learnt is one that the church is destined to re-learn through the ages, for it is so easy for us to forget our Awesome our God is and how jealously He demands our sole worship.

We live in a society where people worship many gods of their own invention and neglect the Mighty God who created them. They see the wonder of creation yet have little regard for the creator. Paul proclaims God's response to this in Romans 1:18-20

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

But the issue we as believers must face relates to the sin that slowly destroyed the people of Israel. The sin of worshipping Almighty God and other gods as well. Putting some other choice thing in our lives before God and our obedience to, and worship of Him.

I have seen people put themselves before God. Refusing to obey a direct command of Christ such as baptism, because it would be inconvenient or even demeaning to them, if they were to follow through on it.

It is so easy for us to put money, or leisure pursuits, or even family before God. And sometimes we embrace a habit which we know offends God but we allow that to control us rather than Him. Giving God the right to ask, 'whom do you serve, and who is your Lord?'

Thankfully our God is so quick to forgive and welcome us back into His embrace when we fail Him. He Himself proclaims in Isaiah 43:25

"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

And then He calls us in the words of Isaiah 45:22

"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

