

<u>Isaiah 1-5</u> Introduction How can one be spared judgement and live happily ever after?	<u>Isaiah 6-39</u> New Creation God will rule over a new, perfect and eternal creation	<u>Isaiah 40-55</u> New relationship God will restore his people from exile to a permanent relationship	<u>Isaiah 56-66</u> Who God will choose the humble and reject the proud
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Isaiah 40-55 explained in under 60 seconds:
youtu.be/z-S3q76crLM

Isaiah 40-48
'I'm coming to get you!'
 YHWH tells his people he will act to fix their relationship

Isaiah 49-55
'Here's the plan!'
 YHWH's suffering servant will bear the penalty for sin, permanently fixing their relationship

Isaiah 44:6-28 (NIVUK)

⁶ '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.
⁷ 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.
⁸ 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.'

⁹ 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.
¹⁰ Who shapes a god and casts an idol,
 which can profit nothing?
¹¹ 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.
¹² 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.
¹³ The carpenter measures with a line
 and makes an outline with a marker;

Sunday 8 February 2026

1st basis of appeal: (44:6-8)
 'no other God is like me!'

2nd basis of appeal: (44:9-20)
 'idols are completely useless'

Isaiah 40-48
‘I’m coming to get you!’
YHWH tells his people he intends to fix their relationship

<u>40:1-11</u> ‘Tell exiled Judah I’m coming!’	<u>40:12-26</u> ‘There’s no other creator like me!’	<u>40:27-41:20</u> ‘No need to be insecure, I want to restore you!’	<u>41:21-29</u> ‘Your idols are useless!’	<u>42:1-7</u> ‘A preview of your future!’	<u>42:8-17</u> ‘Be certain! I have the agency to deliver!’
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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.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.’

¹⁷ 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!’

¹⁸ They know nothing, they understand nothing;
their eyes are plastered over so that they cannot see,
and their minds closed so that they cannot understand.

¹⁹ 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?’

²⁰ 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?’

Initial reaction
Were there any parts of 44:6-20 that caught your eye? Why?

<u>42:18-44:5</u> 'Despite your sin, I want you back!'	<u>44:6-28</u> 'Your idols are useless compared to me!'	<u>45:1-14</u> 'I can even use Cyrus to restore you!'	<u>45:15-25</u> 'You feel my absence, but all will feel my presence!'	<u>46:1-13</u> 'Babylon's idols will end up in captivity'	<u>47:1-15</u> 'I'll humiliate Queen Babylon'	<u>48:1-22</u> 'Despite your stubbornness, I'll rescue you from Babylon!'
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²¹ 'Remember these things, Jacob,

- for you, Israel, are my servant.

I have made you, you are my servant;

Israel, I will not forget you.

- ²² I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist.

Return to me, for I have redeemed you.'

Appeal: (44:21-28)

'So, come back to me...'

²³ 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.

(*'Isn't YHWH great! 🎵'*)

²⁴ '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,

²⁵ who foils the signs of false prophets

and makes fools of diviners,

who overthrows the learning of the wise

and turns it into nonsense,

²⁶ who carries out the words of his servants

and fulfils 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,"

²⁷ who says to the watery deep, "Be dry,

and I will dry up your streams,"

²⁸ 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.'"

'...the unique God!'

Why Cyrus in 44:28?

Each of the functions below arises from a different interpretive question:

1. Cyrus is an example of God's agency and power
2. Cyrus (and the return from Babylon) is the start of God's 2nd Exodus ('I'll rescue you from Babylon, and then fix our relationship forever!')
3. Introduces Cyrus as the main subject of the next passage 45:1-14

What is the Bible-handling question in each case, and what is the immediate or wider context that makes the question relevant?

For reflection on Isaiah 44:6-28

In Isaiah 40–55, YHWH addresses an exiled and insecure Judah, who has relationally ‘settled’ for Babylonian idols. Judah’s experience of banishment and curses has led to doubt that YHWH can be trusted to deliver on huge 2nd Exodus (eternal life) promises.

1. How *risky* does it feel to you to trust God, that he will deliver on his promises?
 2. What are the *idols* that you are tempted to ‘settle’ for instead of trusting in YHWH and his much greater promises?
- 44:6-8
3. YHWH declares his greatness very directly, in the first person (‘*I am the first*’). How do you feel about his tone and content?
 4. How do these verses help you to trust YHWH more?
- 44:9-20
5. How do you hear the tone of these verses? (Be as specific as possible!)
 6. What parts do you particularly enjoy reading? Why?
 7. How do these verses help you to let go of idols in your life?
 8. What differences would you see in your life if you knew these verses better?
- 44:21-28
9. How do 44:21-23 address your answer to (1) above?
 10. In 44:24-28 we again see YHWH declaring his greatness in the first person. How do you feel about his tone and content?
 11. After reading the whole passage, are there particular areas which you need to repent of or pray for?

Bonus Bible-handling for Isaiah 40-55

1. How would you describe the genre of Isaiah 40-55? How might that fit the *Art Gallery* analogy?
2. Isaiah 40-55 repeats certain themes over and over. What might the function be of this literary choice?
3. How does Isaiah use the theme of idols in Isaiah 40-55? Some preachers indicate *rebuke* – to what extent do you agree with this?