

The Sovereignty of God

The Character of God—part 6

Isaiah 45; August 5, 2018

DAY 1: The sovereignty of God

1. God is in control, working out His redemptive purposes in a world rocked with sin and evil.

2. It's easy to understand the sovereignty of God when you think about God ruling in heaven where everything is perfect. It's harder to understand the sovereignty of God, his rule *on Earth*, in a fallen world, with natural disasters, sin at every level: national, state, home, relational, and personal. In spite of all the chaos that is around us, God uses all of it to bring us to himself, working to make our lives and character reflect Christ, and uses our lives to make a difference.

3. The fall of Jerusalem occurred in 586 B.C.

2 Chronicles 36:17 God brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar.

4. The time of exile was seventy years. God wanted to bring the remnant of His people back to Jerusalem. The announcement of this coming restoration occurred through Isaiah the prophet.

Isa. 44:28a (God) 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.'"

5. Cyrus is not a Hebrews name. What does a gentile king have to do with the things of God?" What's astounding is that *this* prophesy was written in 689 B.C., a hundred years **prior** to the fall of Jerusalem!! Cyrus, the Persian King was not even born yet!!

Isa. 41:2 "Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service? He hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him. He turns them to dust with his sword, to windblown chaff with his bow. ⁴ Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD--with the first of them and with the last--I am he."

Isaiah 46:11 "From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have **said**, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will **I do**."

6. The entire prophecy, included in Isaiah and Jeremiah, says that King Cyrus will overthrow world power Babylon, free God's people who have been in captivity for seventy years, return them to Jerusalem, and will pay to have the temple rebuilt. Here's the kicker: this prophecy was written about 175 years before the fact, before Cyrus was even born, and a hundred years before the Hebrews were defeated and taken into captivity!

7. This is an example of the sovereignty of God! What strikes you about God?

We'll look at four applications regarding the sovereignty of God.

DAY 2: He completes His purpose, revealing Himself to people; share Him.

Isa. 45:1 "this is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut;

Isa. 45:4 "For the sake of ...Israel my chosen, I call you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me."

1. God can use anything and anyone to propel His redemptive purposes forward. How is this illustrated in verses 1 and 4?

Isa. 45:5-6 "I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is no other."

2. God reveals Himself in human history, in the events of our lives.

3. What things does God want us to know about Him?

4. What seems most important to God?

5. God is intent on building His kingdom. He wants to reach lost people and save them.

6. Jesus invites us to partner with God in this endeavor:

Matt. 6:33 Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

7. When you share your life story and faith story with others, you make possible the expansion of God's kingdom into the lives of others!

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: He Commands; Obey Him.

Isaiah 45:7 "I form light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things."

1. We expect God to form light. We expect him to bring prosperity, but we don't expect him to "create darkness or disaster." We foolishly assume God is obligated to make my life easier, less pressure, more pleasantness. What surprises you about v. 7?

2. Natural evil, cyclones, hurricanes, earthquakes, drought, he not only permits, but sometimes instigates. Why? Partly, they are consequences of our original sin through Adam, but also, a connection of inward misery with sin, that sin might be felt by us to be an evil thing and a bitter thing. As much as it hurts to lose a child, face financial catastrophe, be deserted, or lose our job or health, there is something worse and that is sin. When we feel the sting of loss or hurt, God wants us to associate the sting of loss with the sting of sin.

Isaiah 45:8 "You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I, the Lord, have created it."

3. What does God want to see?

4. What does God want to see from you?

*Roman 8:28 We know that in all things **God works** for the good of those who love him, who have been **called according to His purpose**.*

*Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the likeness of his Son**...*

5. God will use both "good" things and "bad" things to further His purpose in us, to make us more like His Son.

6. Is there an area of your life where you've been running from God? Resentful where you need forgiveness? Finances, living beyond your means? Stingy? Living in fear; a need to trust God and step out in faith? Relationship with the opposite sex; living by holy standards?

DAY 4: He Creates; yield to him.

Isa. 45:1 “this is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut;

1. The people rebelled against the message that Cyrus would subdue nations. “**What about us?** What about your people? Where are you?” Rebellion of the heart, tongue, and life. They were fighting God, rebelling against God’s authority and dominion over their lives. There is no greater madness or complete folly than to strive against God and his word.

Isaiah 45:9 “Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’ Does your work say, ‘He has no hands!’”

2. I can easily imagine the Israelites in Babylon questioning and criticizing God! “Cyrus? That’s not a Hebrew name! That’s a pagan name!” I can just see the small remnant of God’s people turning to teach other and asking, “Why is God going to use a pagan?”

3. Our thoughts usually “make sense” to us. But that’s not a good assumption!

4. God challenges them on their quarreling with Him. To what does God compare their quarreling with Him? (v. 9)

5. It’s absurd that a pot questions the potter, of a pot sneering at a potter, claiming the potter has no hands!

Isaiah 45:11 “this is what the Lord says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?”

Isaiah 45:12 “It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.”

6. God reminds the people of what He has done and who He is. In vv. 11-12, underline WHAT God has done, and circle words that describe WHO He is.

7. People foolishly and wrongly **insist** on the right to **rule themselves**. We insist on procuring our own “gods,” meaning the highest things for which we will reach: sex outside of marriage, materialism, pleasure, or success, love, marriage, kids, etc.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: God Controls; trust him.

Isaiah 44:27; 45:1 ...who says to the watery deep, "Be dry and I will dry up your streams."

1. "Watery deep" = What does that mean? There was no human way to enter the walled city of Babylon. It was the Titanic of its day: unsinkable; unbeatable, invincible. How could Cyrus possibly defeat the great world power? He couldn't go over the walls. He couldn't go through the walls. God's idea: go under them! Cyrus dug a tunnel to divert the Euphrates River! His army then marched under the city walls at night in about a foot of water! When God prophesied 150 years before is precisely what he did!

2. But what Cyrus' men discovered when they marched inside the city wall was that there were two more walls between them and the Babylonians!

Isa. 45:1 "this is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut;

3. In Daniel 5, King Belshazzar threw a state dinner! Such revelry, that the both main gates of the two interior walls into the city were left open on that night! Cyrus marched in to the city and took Babylon that night!

Isa. 45:13b "He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the Lord Almighty."

4. When this prophecy was spoken there were no exiles. The Hebrews wouldn't be exiles for another 80-100 years. After another seventy years, this prophecy would come true! Cyrus released all the Hebrews and told them to go back to their native land.

5. Not for a price or reward. Ransom money? To be free? Who's going to buy them out of slavery? Transportation costs? Building costs? Temple costs? Refurbishing the temple with its gold and silver? The whole thing, from beginning to end wasn't going to cost them a dime!

Isa. 45:15 Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel.

6. Does Cyrus know all this? Isaiah prophesied our passage 150 before Cyrus takes Babylon along with Israel's captives. It is 80 years before Israel (Judah) is conquered and the people taken to Babylon. It is another 70 years until Cyrus acts. It is likely that after Belshazzar's "untimely" death, Daniel showed Cyrus these prophecies. Cyrus must have been stunned at the specificity—it all happened just as God said, down to the minutest details.

2 Chron. 36:22 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus to make a proclamation thru out his realm and to put it in writing

2 Chron. 36:23 "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you—may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up."

7. What is your take away this week, about the sovereignty of God?