

### Scripture Text

Isaiah 44.24-45.25

### Context

Isaiah was enabled by God to address the Jewish captives far away in Babylon in sixth century B.C. He announces a promise that God is coming with a world-changing display of his glory (40:5). To prepare for his coming, the exiles must return to the Promised Land (48:20). They must not be demoralised by the impressive but empty culture of idolatry in which they live (41:21–24), nor should they resent God's use of a pagan conqueror, Cyrus the Great, as their liberator from Babylon (44:24–28). They must look by faith for a greater liberator still to come, the messianic "Servant of the Lord" (see note on 42:1–9). He will bring justice to the nations (42:1–4) and save his people from their ultimate captivity, the guilt of sin (52:13–53:12).

### Observation and Meaning

- What is the encouraging promise of God in 44v26? How would this have greatly encouraged the exiles?
- God calls Cyrus (a pagan ruler, who doesn't know God, 45.4) to be the one who delivers his people. What will Cyrus do and why will God lead him to do it? (44.28-45.7)
- Scandalously, God calls this pagan ruler Cyrus a shepherd (44.28) and his anointed, or messiah (45.1) Why would this have stunned God's people? What does this tell us about how God is willing to use unusual methods in history to achieve his purposes?
- How are God's people tempted to respond to the way God fulfills his purposes (45.8-10)?
- What similarities do you see between Cyrus and Jesus? What is both offensive and surprising about God's deliverance through Jesus?
- How does God want us to respond to his work of salvation (45.22)? Why are we encouraged to be saved by God (45.23)?

### Big Idea

Though we are often confused by his ways, God is the One who works through all of history to fulfill his promises and display his purposes in the world. We are to respond in faith even when it doesn't make sense, believe his word, and look to him to be saved.

### Connecting to Bible Storyline

God is the One who has ordained to work through history to save a people for himself. Here we see how he uses pagan rulers for the sake of his people, that they might know his salvation.

### Sermon Outline

1. See God's unconventional faithfulness (44.24-45.8)
2. Acknowledge mankind's undiscerning arrogance (45.9-13)
3. Respond to God unequivocal invitation (45.14-25)

### Applications

- Which promises of God do you find it hard to believe because they seem so unlikely?
- How are you tempted to react to God when he does things in unusual (or even offensive) ways?
- How are we tempted to dismiss God's salvation for us in Christ because it seems so different from the salvation we expect?
- What does it practically mean for you to look to God and be saved? In what areas of your life do you need to turn to him for deliverance now?

## Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

### Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

### Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?  
What is the situation of the author and of the readers?  
Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?  
Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

### Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.