

ISAIAH

Chapter 44

Israel the LORD's Chosen

“But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! 2 Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. 4 They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. 5 This one will say, ‘I am the LORD's,’ another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, ‘The LORD's,’ and name himself by the name of Israel.”

44:1 *but now* – Refers to both to a change in the argument’s logic and a change from the past to present/future. (TLSB)

The last words of the previous chapter announced judgment upon God’s people. The sins of the people were the reason for these sharp words of judgment. (PBC)

O JACOB – The uses comforting language to describe Israel. (TLSB)

I have chosen – Completed action of the verbs demonstrates secure status before the Lord. (TLSB)

The people deserved judgment, but God remains always more ready to extend grace than to inflict punishment. (PBC)

44:2 *in the womb*. See v. 24. The tenderness of the Creator is shown (see also 49:5; Jer 1:5). (CSB)

fear not. This is pure comfort designed to induce us to cling to the Word. (Luther)

Because Israel was delivered “to utter destruction” for its sins (43:28), it had every reason to be afraid. Anyone facing destruction knows how welcome and necessary it is to be told repeatedly: fear not. If the enslaved Israelites are to cast out fear, they must see the folly of trusting idols. (TLSB)

Jeshurun.† A term of endearment referring to Israel (see v. 1); found elsewhere only in Dt 32:15. (CSB)

It is used when Moses rehearsed the covenant of God with a new generation of Israelites. The old generation had died in the wilderness because of their rebellion and sin. A new generation had taken their place and were ready to advance into the Promised Land. Most commentators consider it to mean “my upright, or righteous, one.” It’s as if it were God’s pet name for His people and provides an important contrast to the people who rebelled against God in the wilderness and those who turned away from Him in Judah during the days of Isaiah. (PBC)

“I will have My eyes directly on you.” (Luther)

44:3 *pour water ... streams.*† Water brings life where there is none. (TLSB)

pour out my Spirit. Associated with the Messianic age in 32:15 and Joel 2:28. (CSB)

Gift of the Holy Spirit is life-giving. Those with the Spirit are no longer grass that withers but are full of life. (TLSB)

The picture emphasizes the grace of God. (PBC)

44:4 *shall spring up* – Blessings of the Spirit are described as having the effect of showers of rain on “thirsty land.” (TLSB)

The comparison is found in Psalm 1. Up comes a multitude as abundant as willows, grasses, and trees around the water. In this way the prophet wants to show the power of the blessing in that it grows constantly in spite of Satan’s onslaughts. (Luther)

More is meant than the mere fact that the growth involved merely germinates. It is implied that it will continue to grow and prosper. (Leupold)

grass. A symbol of luxuriant growth also in 35:7 (contrast 37:27; 40:6–8). (CSB)

44:5 *call ... by the name.*† A willingness to identify with the Lord’s people. (CSB)

Among the descendants (v. 3) of the new Israel will be Gentiles, who cannot claim sonship by natural birth. They will give oral and written testimony of their desire to be the Lord’s and will enjoy the blessings of membership in His people. (TLSB)

write on his hand. Perhaps a mark of ownership (cf. 49:16; Rev 13:16) or a reminder of one’s allegiance (cf. Ex 13:9, 16). (CSB)

Beyond calling on God’s name, some place a visible reminder of God on themselves, recalling the binding of the Word on one’s hand and forehead. (Dt. 6:8) (TLSB)

44:1–5 Through the work of God’s Spirit, the chosen people grow in number. When you share God’s Word with others, bear in mind that conversion and salvation are the Holy Spirit’s work through the truth you share. Take comfort and confidence that He will fulfill His promises. • O gracious Lord, pour out the Holy Spirit with all His blessings, that many may hear and believe through my testimony in Your name. Amen. (TLSB)

Besides Me There Is No God

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. 7 Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. 8 Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.”

44:6 *thus says the Lord* – God is speaking, and our charge is simply to listen. The three names used in this verse are significant. They not only tell us who God is, but also tell us what he does. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

The messenger formula, “thus says Yahweh,” suggests that a new subsection begins. As is expected in chapters 40-55, this dictum is followed by a series of divine titles for or descriptions of Yahweh (e.g., 43:1, 14, 16; 44:2, 6; 45:11, 18; 48:17; 49:7). (CC)

King. Here Yahweh is the King of Israel, the nation’s Redeemer, the Commander of armies, and the first and the last. These names form the foundation for the rest of the section as Yahweh asserts he is the only God, period. Monotheism could not be stated with any more clarity. The real power of the universe exists outside of it. Authority resides with the Creator, not within creation. (CC)

Here we see both his relationship to his people in terms of majesty and loving concern. A true king is always mindful of the condition of those under him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

God’s special relationship with His own comes through His governance. (TLSB)

He has administered the affairs of His people efficiently. No single human king who ever ruled over God’s people was a perfect king. They all had faults, some of them serious faults. The Lord is the perfect, wise ruler of His people. He controls all the affairs of His people in a way that is best for them. (PBC)

Redeemer. Yahweh is also Israel’s Redeemer. Job makes the same confession (Job 19:25), and in the end Yahweh doubles what Job had earlier lost (Job 42:12-13). In like manner, the exiles will be enabled to rebuild the temple (Is. 42:10-11; 44:23; 49:13; 55:12-13). Deprived of everything, Israel will get back – and much more in Christ (Heb. 11:39-40). (CC)

This is incarnation theology. The King of the universe, who is above time and space, the King of Israel, who rules and cares for his subjects, this King is also our kin. God is the closest relative of Israel, the kin who redeems (Ruth). The rescue of Israel at the time of Moses is recalled throughout the prophet, but the title also points forward to the great Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

Unlike idols, God actually delivers His people. (TLSB)

Lord of hosts The word “Lord” is a special name God revealed. He is Jehovah, the God of free and faithful grace, that is, the God of the covenant. Additionally, He is all powerful in that He controls the hosts of heaven. (PBC)

He is the one who has the entire host of created things always under total control. When such a one speaks he merits attention. (Leupold)

first ... last. Yahweh is “the everlasting God” (40:28). With the double title “the first and the last,” he reiterates this point. To be uniquely the first and the last (Is. 44:6) is to have been the only God in existence and present throughout Israel’s story, the only one working out a purpose in that story in its entirety from its beginning until this coming consummation.” This double title is given to Jesus in Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13 as a testimony that he is Yahweh, come in the flesh. There is no other God! (CC)

“Fear not, because I, your Creator and Maker, am also first and last. At all times I am the first and the last.” This denotes the uniqueness of God, as if to say, “If there ever was a God or if there is one now, I am the One.” (Luther)

As first He has no creator; as last, He alone remains standing. (TLSB)

besides ... god. This last part of the verse reminds us of the First Commandment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

The uniqueness of Israel’s religion recalls the word of Moses and Miriam at the Red Sea: “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods?” (Ex 15:11). Certainly the Lord is not one god among many. The Large Catechism states, “Their trust is not placed in the only God, beside whom there is truly no God in heaven or upon earth. Therefore, the heathen really make their self-invented notions and dreams of God an idol. Ultimately, they put their trust in that which is nothing. So it is with all idolatry. For it happens not merely by erecting an image and worshiping it, but rather it happens in the heart. For the heart stands gaping at something else. It seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devil.” Hilary of Poitiers in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series 2* says, “It is contrary to religion to say that there are two Gods, because we remember and declare that nowhere has it been affirmed that there is more than one God.” (TLSB)

44:7 *who is like me* – Here God challenges the idols. Yahweh, the one true God, has been making and keeping prophecies since the beginning of time. As long as the human race has existed, no person, place, or thing has ever foretold the future as the Lord has. Only God’s Word is sure and certain; the exile itself is proof of that. Since God’s Word alone can be trusted, trust it now when God offers a word of comfort, hope and restoration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

Israel is on trial, again, and before them Yahweh places life and death (cf. Deut. 30:15). Who is like Yahweh? He challenges all rivals with the same argument used earlier (41:21-24, 26-29; 43:8-13). Yahweh alone is able to predict the future and bring it to pass. Like the previous trial scenes, the court is silent. Babylonian gods have no witnesses because these deities have accomplished nothing. Their would-be witnesses have nothing to witness to! Yet none of their adherents dare whisper, “The emperor has no clothes.” These frauds continue their pattern of “no show.” (CC)

set it before. Again in a courtroom setting, God orders the devotees of a god to act as witnesses on behalf of their idol. (TLSB)

Yahweh continues the cross-examination. He, for his part, established a people from ancient times. This relates to Israel’s beginnings and falls into the same category as his creating, shaping, choosing, calling, and redeeming the nation (e.g., 43:1; 44:1-2; cf. Rom. 8:30). “If there are many gods, what is happening happens in the first place between the gods, between divine beings. If there is only one God, all that is happening takes place between this one God and his creation – including his people. (CC)

appointed an ancient people – The Lord has chosen and guided Israel with clear, concrete, historical examples such as the exodus. (TLSB)

declare. “Produce someone who can in proper order predict the future and make it come to pass, as I have done and predicted. I speak and I act.” (Luther)

44:8 *fear no, nor be afraid* – His superiority assures His faithful people that He can take care of them. God encourages His people not fear and tremble as they face the difficulties of the Babylonian captivity or any other catastrophe or problem. (PBC)

You are my witnesses. Contrasted with the witnesses of the idols in v.9. The Lord does concrete historical deeds for Israel that can be seen, but the idols' witnesses can tell of no concrete actions and are put to shame. (TLSB)

Rock. As in v. 2; 43:11–13, Isaiah may be drawing on the song of Moses, which describes God as “the Rock” (Dt 32:4, 15, 30–31), but the metaphor is also common in the Psalms. (CSB)

Testifying to the claims of 44:6-7 would be a fearful thing for at least two reasons: (1) the Babylonians may not believe it, and (2) the exiles themselves may not embrace it. A good lawyer briefs his witnesses before they stand in the court. That is what Yahweh does. He encourages his people to recall the ancient pledge that he is their Rock (e.g., 2 Sam. 22:2-4/ Ps. 18:2). Israel is prepped to announce a fact that popular opinion will not tolerate. Yahweh is the only God. “The Lord planned, proclaimed, and announced long ago what is now bringing to pass, and unlike the gods of the other nations, has witnesses to prove it. (CC)

When the flood of troubles roars as a mighty stream toward His people, God assures His people that He is the rock that remains. The waters may swirl fiercely around it, but the rock provides safety in the midst of life's surging troubles. (PBC)

The rock imagery used by God to describe himself is quite common (33 times in the OT), especially in the Psalms, 2 Samuel 22 and Deuteronomy 32. Is 17:10 gives us a good understanding of what is meant by the term. God is our help, our strength, and our refuge. When flood-waters rise, we have security, not in the high places of idol worship, but in the height of our Rock-God. His promises are rock-solid; bad news for the idol-worshipping heathen and good news for Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

44:6–8 The Lord calls the idolaters back to court and swears that He alone is God. If you experience fear about bearing witness before others, reread the passage—even commit it to memory. The Lord of hosts is with you when you share the Word. • You are my only refuge, O Redeemer. Love, care for, and strengthen me from first to last, eternal God. Amen. (TLSB)

The Folly of Idolatry

9 All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. 10 Who fashions a god or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? 11 Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human. Let them all assemble, let them stand forth. They shall be terrified; they shall be put to shame together. 12 The ironsmith takes a cutting tool and works it over the coals. He fashions it with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He becomes hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint. 13 The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. 14 He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. 15 Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol

and falls down before it. 16 Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, “Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!” 17 And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!” 18 They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. 19 No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, “Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?” 20 He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?”

44:9–20 A satire on the folly of idolatry. (CSB)

The Large Catechism states, “What does it mean to have a god? Or, what is God? Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a God is nothing other than trusting and believing Him with the heart. I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust is right, then your god is also true. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God (Heb 11:6). Now, I say that whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god.” (TLSB)

44:9 *nothing ... worthless.* Like the nations and their idols (see 40:17; 41:24 and notes). (CSB)

The word *nothing* takes us back to the creation of the world, before God shaped the formless and empty earth and while darkness still spread over the face of the deep. (PBC)

All image-makers are **בְּהִי**, that is, useless and vain. Likewise the things that are dear to them, their finest and most desirable, can do nothing for them. (Luther)

their witnesses. Because the idols need active creations, their weakness results in silent witnesses. (TLSB)

The same is stated in Ps. 115:5. The images are like those who make them. As their god is, such is their teaching and their religion. Their god is nothing, he is a manufactured object. What sort of worship could they have? (Luther)

shame. Cf. v. 11; 42:17; 45:16. (CSB)

That is, that all their idolatries may be put to shame, one after the other. The Word of God abides forever. (Luther)

44:10 *profitable for nothing* – It is as if he were saying: “Who is so stupid and crazy as to fashion a god and cast a useless image?” This is indignation. “What do you think you are doing, you mortal creatures, fashioning the true God for yourself?” (Luther)

44:11 *craftsmen.* That is, “ungodly teachers.” (Luther)

Associated with manufacturing and veneration of idols. (TLSB)

all assemble – As if to say, “Even if they should all gather together with all their resources.” Even if they come together and stand together, they shall nevertheless be put to shame. Even if they should conspire and make plans, their conscience shall nevertheless at length be confounded and become alarmed. For those who are zealous of works shall finally be terrified. Those who believe in God shall not be put to shame. (Luther)

Water cannot rise above its level. So the human cannot produce the divine. (Leupold)

only human. Ironically, the idol, dependent on its craftsman’s strength, is supposed to be the source of strength. (TL SB)

44:12–20 Two idols are described: a metal one in v. 12 and a wooden one in vv. 13–20. The latter was more common (see 40:20). (CSB)

44:12 *takes a cutting tool* – Translated “axe” in Jeremiah 10:3. To make a useless idol, he destroys a useful tool. (TL SB)

no water and is faint. But God never gets tired (40:28). (CSB)

If the idol maker himself gets hungry and tired, can he produce something less dependent? (TL SB)

44:13 *the carpenter* – An idol has only the beauty of a man and is less than its craftsman. (TL SB)

stretches a line – Simple string with marks as a tape measure. (TL SB)

with a pencil. Craftsman limits the idol’s shape with a mere pencil. (TL SB)

with planes – With planes and perhaps chisels, he removes the excess wood. (TL SB)

compass – For drawing round shapes of the idol. (TL SB)

figure of a man. Man was made in the image of God, but an idol is made in the image of man (Dt 4:16; Ro 1:23). (CSB)

dwelt in a house – Likely refers to little niches or shrines that show the idol’s limits. (TL SB)

44:14 *cedars ... cypress ... oak*. The most valuable kinds of wood then known. (CSB)

He is strong among the woods of the forest. The carpenter throws himself into his task and hews away with all the strength of his arm, just as the ironsmith does. This again denotes the wretched result of an ungodly religion. In vain they use up their strength and get nothing out of life, like the devil’s martyrs. (Luther)

Idols need the care of the carpenter. They are not the true God, who cares for His own people. (TL SB)

44:15-17 The most sophisticated idol that a man crafts with the tools of his mind is just as ludicrous as a primitive god carved out of wood. Consider modern, sophisticated pantheism, which sees creation as god and commits the same folly. (TL SB)

44:15 *makes a god and worships*. It is preposterous to pray to something made of the same substance that serves as heating and cooking fuel. It can be nothing more than, “the figure of a man” (v. 13), a likeness and projection of himself, as fallible, unreliable, and impotent as he is. (TLSB)

44:16 *eats meat; he roasts*. Although wood serves common purposes, it is also made into an idol (see v. 19). (CSB)

Here the prophet shows fully how foolish that man is. It is as if he were saying: “Is he not an outstanding fool? He knows that he has used the same wood for cooking.” (Luther)

44:17 *deliver me*. King Amaziah was condemned for worshipping the gods of Seir, a nation he had defeated in battle (2Ch 25:14–15). Isaiah denounces such idolatry as totally irrational (see 45:20). Whereas those who worshiped idols associated the god with the idol, for Isaiah there was no god for the idol to represent, so he depicts idolatry as worship of a mere “block of wood” (v. 19). (CSB)

44:18 *They*. Both the idol and those who make and worship it are blinded. (TLSB)

he. Unclear whether the idolater or God is intended. (TLSB)

has shut their eyes. Israel’s condition in 6:9–10. The description ironically characterizes both the idols and those who worship them. See also Ps 82:5. (CSB)

Lit, “he plastered their eyes [to prevent] seeing.” Idols had white plaster eyes with dark eyeballs painted on. (TLSB)

Their eyes have been plastered shut. *Plastered*, from the verb “to bedaub,” denotes their dense blindness, so that there is no understanding in their hearts. They are unable properly to see the external rope. This is certainly the case when we fall away from faith and come to another opinion. All things that occur to it are measured by that opinion. (Luther)

44:19 *abomination*. The Lord detests idols (see Dt 27:15). In 1Ki 11:5, 7; 2Ki 23:13 Molech and Chemosh are called detestable gods. Those who worship idols are also called detestable. (CSB)

Clearly the craftsmen who build idols and fires with the same wood are left ignorant by their idols. Their folly and abomination are apparent to those who worship the Lord. (TLSB)

They do not stop to think: “This wood has been torn and chopped and burned. Should I still worship it?” (Luther)

44:20 *feeds on ashes*. Even devoted worship does not benefit the idolater. Cf. Hos 12:1. (CSB)

Turns to idols, made of the same substance as ashes, for nourishment and provision. (TLSB)

lie. Or “fraud.” See 2Th 2:11. (CSB)

Because the idol itself is a lie, those who worship it also base their lives on lies. (TLSB)

The LORD Redeems Israel

21 Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. 22 I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you. 23 Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and will be glorified in Israel. 24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, 25 who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, 26 who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited,’ and of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins’; 27 who says to the deep, ‘Be dry; I will dry up your rivers’; 28 who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’; saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”

44:21–22 *these things*. These comforting truths: There is only one true God. You are His servant. He has blotted out your transgressions (43:25). He has redeemed you. (TLSB)

44:21 *my servant*. Israel serves a truly powerful God rather than sustaining a weak idol. (TLSB)

I formed you – Opposite of idolatry. (TLSB)

44:22 *blotted out your transgressions*. God silences and removes any testimony of sin against His people. (TLSB)

A most beautiful text! “Remember the God who sweeps away your transgressions.” This is said in opposition to the idols. It is as if He were saying: “The idols cannot forgive sins; on the contrary, they make their devotees weary. Therefore it is clear: No work, no worship and religion removes sin. I alone do that, and I sweep it away like a cloud.” The comparison is taken from the sun. Just as the sun absorbs the clouds up in the sky like snow, so the rising sun in the morning purifies the mist-enshrouded earth. “Even so I sweep sin away.” Here Christ is pictured in His own activity. There we must look upon Him as the eternal High Priest, who should kill all sins of the whole world. He is not a judge as the papists make Him out to be. “My business is to sweep away sins, just as it is the sun’s business to sweep away cloud and mist.” You see the sun’s effectiveness, how powerfully, not immediately but little by little, it swallows up the clouds. Just so God every day swallows up the cloud in us, so that day by day we walk in a stronger faith. Faith is the light of the heart and the work of the Holy Spirit, who is active in the daily conduct and edification. It is Christ’s business to sweep away sins like cloud and mist. (Luther)

Return to me. Cf. Jer 31:18. (CSB)

Israel is already redeemed and, therefore, can return. (TLSB)

The One who removes sins. God recalls us from our idolatry and ungodliness: “Believe Me, cling to Me!” By His Word He will strengthen you. It is as if He were saying: “I know that you toil hard and are under daily trial. For that reason a daily return is necessary.” As it is Christ’s business always to forgive, so it is our business, as we are engulfed by daily cares, to be converted day by day. (Luther)

redeemed. There is no other Redeemer. You will find none. (Luther)

44:23 *Sing O heavens*. Nature is called on to join in praise (see also 35:1; 49:13). (CSB)

Witness of nature called against the people in 1:2 is now called on to rejoice in the grace of the Lord. (TLSB)

deaths of the earth – Rejoicing will be complete when heaven and earth are also restored. (TLSB)

44:24 *thus says the Lord* – This verse begins another section of the prophecy. This verse also recalls the opening verses of the chapter. (PBC)

Redeemer. God begins the definition of Himself first as Redeemer, not Creator or Lord, showing His love to His own people. (TLSB)

who formed you from the womb – God creates His people with their redemption in Christ clearly in view. (TLSB)

I am the Lord – He identifies Himself as Jehovah, the Savior God and then continues by listing all that He has done and will do. The NIV translates the nine different actions of God as relative clauses beginning with “who” and emphasizes them by the margin. (PBC)

made all things – For He created all things that are and still majestically controls them by determining the outcome of history. (Leupold)

stretched out ... spread out. He similarly spread out the earth and there was no one who was needed to be of assistance. (Leupold)

44:25 *signs of liars*. Pagans sought omens as supernatural backing for their words. (TLSB)

diviners. The Hebrew for this word is used of Balaam (Jos 13:22), the witch of Endor (1Sa 28:8) and false prophets (Jer 27:9). It is linked with soothsaying and sorcery. (CSB)

Babylonians were particularly noted for dependence on official diviners and horoscopes. (TLSB)

makes their knowledge foolish. God had made all the efforts of the fortunetellers of none effect. He nullified the omens to which they attached so much importance, made all their knowledge appear to be folly. (Leupold)

44:26 *servant ... messengers*. The true prophets. (CSB)

OT prophets and, ultimately, His Son. What spokesmen proclaim in the name of Him who “made all things” (v 24) and whom the forces of nature obey (v 27) will come true, whereas fortunetelling diviners will prove to be liars (v 25). (TLSB)

inhabited ... built. See Jer 32:15; cf. Isa 58:12; 61:4. (CSB)

raise up their ruins. Contrast 6:11. (CSB)

The Lord’s people will once again be delivered from slavery. (TLSB)

44:27–28 Promise is strengthened, fulfilling the rebuilding mentioned in 41:2–3, 25. Many attempts have been made to understand how the proper name “Cyrus” could show up in a text written 200 years before the time of Cyrus II, king of Persia (2Ch 36:22–23; Ezr 1:1–3). Some think this proves a later date for the writing of Is, making it written after Cyrus II. Others think a scribe living at the time of Cyrus II inserted the proper name into the eighth-century text. The name itself appears at other times in Persia. In fact, an earlier Cyrus reigned nearer the time of Isaiah (king in Parsua, 646 BC). Attempts to explain away the text fail to understand how important the use of Cyrus’s proper name is to the argument of the text itself. This is clearly a prophecy and fulfillment from God. For another example of someone named centuries before his birth, see the prediction of Josiah’s reformation in 1Ki 13:1–2. (TLSB)

44:27 *Be dry.*† As he said to the Red Sea. (CSB)

44:28 *Cyrus.* The Lord shows His unrivaled status among the false gods of Babylon because He is able to predict the proper name of Cyrus before this monarch lived. The Lord can keep His promises and comfort His people Israel. Cyrus II was king of Persia and conquered Babylon in 539. (TLSB)

shepherd. Often applied to rulers (see 2Sa 5:2; Jer 23:2). (CSB)

Calling Cyrus a shepherd brings him in line with the leaders of Israel, such as Moses (Ex 3:1) and David (2Sm 7:8). (TLSB)

all My purpose. Cyrus was to show the kind of concern and guidance a shepherd provides for his flock. (TLSB)

Your foundation shall be laid. Cyrus issued a decree that allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (TLSB)

Jerusalem ... temple. The decree of Cyrus (Ezr 1:2–4; 6:3–5) authorized the rebuilding of the temple, which would lead to a restored Jerusalem (see 45:13). (CSB)

44:9–28 The Lord prophesies the restoration of His people, centuries before the events take place. Today, despite the difficulties that beset you, the Lord holds your future securely. In fact, He planned for your future through His beloved Son. • O Redeemer, I entrust all my days to Your care. Fulfill Your purpose for me. Amen. (TLSB)