

# GOD'S EXTRAORDINARY POWER TO SAVE ANYONE WHO TURNS TO HIM

## ISAIAH 45:18–25

### *Introduction*

The lust for power is a strong craving within the human heart. Holding power is not wrong or evil. In fact, there must be leaders in positions of authority for society to function properly. But craving power for the purpose of dominating or enslaving others arises from an evil heart. Tragically, many rulers of the world down through history have sought power for the purpose of controlling the citizens of a nation and then revelling in the wealth and luxury of their top government positions.

But for most of us, the craving for power is far more limited. Most of us simply want the power to command people's attention, to and convince them of the worth of our opinions or our way of doing things. Having enough power to influence people to do what we desire or think seems to satisfy most people. But even this limited longing for power arises from hearts that are self-centred. No matter what position of authority we hold, we must always keep our motives pure. We must use whatever power or influence we have for the welfare of our neighbours, our community and for society as a whole.

God's enormous power is the subject of this Scripture. God uses His power for good at all times. He never uses it for evil. Down through history, He has always used His power to work all things out for good, both for the human race in general and for His people. This fact is clearly seen in the present Scripture. This is, *A Look at the Extent of God's Extraordinary Power to Set Free Anyone who Turns to Him*, Isaiah 45:18-25.

### ***Isaiah 45:18–25 God's Power to Save All who Turn to Him***

God has the power to save all people, no matter where they are from. There is only one requirement: they must turn to the Lord. In discussing His power to save people, the Lord first declares that salvation is sure. He then makes an appeal to the people of all nations. Finally, He issues a strong warning to everyone. Note the Scripture and outline:

1. God wants everyone to know and be confident in His power to save all people. No matter who they are — Gentile or Jew, idolater or true worshipper — the LORD can save all those who genuinely trust Him. God gives three assurances to prove He has the power to save even the most stubborn and defiant of the earth:
    - a. God's enormous power to create the universe proves that He has unlimited power. Any power strong enough to create the universe can save anyone.
    - b. God created the earth for a very specific purpose — so that it might be fruitful and inhabited by the human race. The earth is not supposed to be empty or desolate. Given that, God will not destroy all the people of earth. He will save those who turn to the Saviour for redemption (v. 15).
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- c. God's Word gives the assurance of salvation, for God speaks only the truth. Longing for people to be saved, the LORD does not speak in a whisper or in a dark corner where people can barely hear. He does not encourage people to seek Him in vain; nor does He deceive people and leave them empty because they cannot understand what He is saying. Rather, the Lord *speaks* the truth and encourages people to *seek* the truth.
2. God longs for people to be saved and to escape the coming judgment (vv. 20-22). Therefore, He makes a threefold appeal to the people of all nations.
  - a. God appeals to people to turn from their idols, because they are only material objects that cannot save them. Worshipping idols only exposes people's ignorance. Idols have no life, so of course they are powerless to help those who pray to them and cry out for their help.
  - b. God appeals to people to acknowledge that He alone is God (v. 21). He has proven His claim by foretelling the judgment of Babylon and the release of His people from captivity (v. 21). Predicting these two phenomenal events and fulfilling them in every detail are unquestionable proof that He alone is God, the righteous LORD and Saviour of the world. There is no other God.
  - c. God appealed to the people to look to Him in order to be saved (v. 22). He alone is God. There is no other person or so-called god who can save people from all the ends of the earth; people are to look to Him for salvation.
3. In closing His discussion of salvation, God issues a strong warning to the people of all nations (vv. 23-25). The warning must be heeded, especially because it is issued under a threefold oath. The Lord swears that three events will take place:
  - a. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess to Him. This means that the entire world will bow before Christ:

**Rom. 14:11-12** *It is written: "‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee shall bow before me; every tongue will confess to God’" So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

**Phil 2:9-11** *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
  - b. Every individual who opposes the LORD and lives an unrighteous life will face God's judgment (v. 24).
  - c. Every descendant of Israel (all true believers) will be declared righteous by the LORD and will enter glory with Him (v. 25).

**Thought 1.** God has the power to save not just everyone but anyone. No matter how sinful, wicked or corrupt a person may be, the LORD can save that person. Christ did

not come to save the righteous, those who already know and love the LORD but the unrighteous. The person who lives in a cesspool of immorality can be saved. The person who has worshipped idols and false gods can be saved. The person who has stolen, lied, deceived, burned with hostility or hatred, abused or assaulted others, maimed or murdered, or committed any other sinful behaviour can be saved. No matter what wrong we have done, we can be saved.

But salvation is conditional. We must believe in the LORD Jesus Christ and repent of our sins. To repent means to turn away from sin and follow Christ, to live obediently and righteously by obeying God's holy commandments. All who heed God's warning — who sincerely turn away from their sins, repent and follow Christ — will be saved. Salvation is open to all, regardless of social class, wealth, ethnicity or past behaviour. Listen to God's Holy Word:

**Luke 19:10** *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

**John 3:16-17** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

**Acts 2:21** *And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

**Acts 5:31** *God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

**Rom 10:9-10, 13** *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.... For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

**1 Tim 1:15** *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.*

**Titus 2:11-12** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

**Heb 7:25** *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

**2 Pet 3:9** *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

**Isa 1:18** *“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*

**Isa 55:1** *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.” ■*

# SET FREE BY TURNING AWAY FROM IDOLATRY: A STUDY OF IDOLATRY ISAIAH 46:01–13

## *Introduction*

Idolatry, worshipping something other than the LORD, is a horrifying evil. It is bound to be repugnant in the sight of the LORD, the only living and true God, the Creator of the universe with its hundreds of billions of stars and galaxies. Think about it: There are over 200 billion stars in our galaxy alone, and there are also over 200 hundred billions galaxies? The numbers are staggering, beyond our comprehension or imagination? The vastness of our universe just explodes the human mind! The LORD Himself dwells in a glory that mere men cannot possibly fathom. In light of His radiant glory and magnificence, the LORD must be totally repelled when anyone worships something or someone other than Him, the only living and true God. Considering God's creation and the wonderful salvation He has provided for the human race, it is inconceivable how anyone could deny God.

Idolatry is the subject of the present Scripture. Isaiah had already predicted that Babylon would be the agent of the judgment God had pronounced upon Israel. In the present Scripture, Isaiah predicts that the LORD would also eventually judge Babylon because of its cruelty and wickedness. And the false gods and idols worshipped by the citizens of Babylon would be powerless to stop God's judgment. Despite the people's crying out to their gods for deliverance, the great empire would fall. The idols in which the people trusted would be helpless, unable to save them. This is the subject of the present Scripture: *Set Free by Turning Away from Idolatry: A Study of Idolatry*, Isaiah 46:1-13

- I. The fate of idolaters and their idols (vv. 1-2).
- II. The contrasting fate of genuine believers (vv. 3-4).
- III. The powerlessness of false gods to save their worshippers (vv. 5-7).
- IV. The strong appeal of God to idolaters (all false worshippers) (vv. 8-13).

## ***I. Isaiah 46:01–02 The Fate of Idolaters and Their Idols***

The fate of idolaters and their idols is described in a sad, tragic picture of war. Babylon was to be defeated in war, with all the bloody carnage of slain and wounded soldiers, the cruel slaughter and rape of citizens, and the destruction of property. As a result of Babylon's defeat, the truth about the people's gods would be exposed: they were false and powerless to help their worshippers. They were supposed to bring deliverance and give victory over Babylon's enemies. But instead they were just like the citizens of Babylon, stooping in utter defeat and bowing down before the conquering enemy (v. 1).

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*Bel*, meaning *lord*, was another name for Marduk, the chief god of Babylon. Bel was the same false god the Canaanites worshipped as *Baal*. The other chief god of Babylon, *Nebo*, was thought to be Bel's son. He was worshipped as the god of fate, wisdom, writing, learning and astronomy.

The Babylonians were a very religious people and totally devoted to their so-called gods. This is clearly seen in the frequency with which the Babylonians combined the names of their gods with the names of the children. For example, Nebo (or Nebu) is part of the names Nebuchadnezzar, Nebopolassar, and Nebonidus, while Bel is part of the name Belshazzar. Naming their children after their gods shows just how much the people placed their trust in them.

Obviously, when the Babylonians faced the hardships and misfortunes of life, they turned to their so-called gods in prayer and worship, seeking their help. In particular, at times of desperation such as war or personal assault, the people would cry out to their gods to save them. But the Babylonians were to learn a much-needed lesson: their gods were false and therefore could not help them, could not meet their needs. These false gods could not carry the people through their fiery trial. Instead, the idols themselves would be carried away by their victorious enemy. Rather than rescuing the Babylonians from their burden, their so-called gods would suffer a humiliating defeat and become a burden to the weary animals that would carry them away as plunder of war (v. 2).

The graphic picture being painted of both idols and idolaters is that of utter defeat, of being either destroyed or led into captivity. False gods are not able to help or save those who worship them. Worshippers of a false god are doomed to defeat and death without the help of the LORD, the only living and true God. And when their lives are over, worshippers of false gods will feel the hand of God's judgment. They will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is the undeniable pronouncement of God's Holy Word:

*1 Cor 6:9-10* Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

*Gal 5:19, 21* The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

*Eph 5:3-6* But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ

*and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.*

**Rev 21:8** *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

## **II. Isaiah 46:03–04 The Fate of True Believers**

The fate of true believers is the exact opposite of the fate of idolaters. Down through the centuries, the Israelites had suffered terrifying trials and enormous loss of life due to oppression and warfare. Now as Isaiah foresaw the future Babylonian conquest and captivity, he saw that few Israelites would survive the slaughter of the war and the harsh deportation of the survivors. Those who were taken captive and dispersed throughout the Babylonian Empire would suffer greatly. But note God's admonition to listen to Him, for He had a wonderful promise for Israel, in particular for those who truly believed and followed Him.

The Israelites were God's creation, both as individuals and as a nation. From their very conception, the LORD had taken care of them. From the day of their birth, He had carried them, nurturing and nourishing them (v. 3). Remember that Israel's birth as a nation took place when the people were delivered from Egyptian slavery and given God's law at Mount Sinai. Down through the centuries, the LORD had always looked after and protected His people. When they suffered defeat and destruction at the hands of enemies, it was always due to their own wicked behaviour and the need for God to discipline them. But even in times of disaster and chastisement, the LORD was looking after His people. He was using the discipline to correct them lest they bring further harm to themselves or to others. Although the discipline sometimes seemed oppressive, and even destructive, the LORD had always brought His people through the harsh ordeals.

Now the Israelites were about to face more grave challenges, and the LORD wanted them to know a very significant fact: He would always be with His people, even to their old age (v. 4). He is the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh), the only living and true God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). Therefore, He would continue to carry His people through all of their hardships. He would sustain them, hold them up and give them the strength to walk through all the trials and temptations of the future. Just as He has done for the believers of the past, so He will do for the believers of the present and the future. The LORD will protect, guide and provide whatever we need throughout all of life, even to our old age.

**Heb 13:5-6** *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

**Exo 19:4** *'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'*

**Deu 33:27** *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, 'Destroy him!'*

**Psa 18:35** *You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great.*

**Psa 28:7** *The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

**Psa 40:17** *Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer: O my God, do not delay.*

**Psa 91:11-12** *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*

**Isa 41:10** *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

**Isa 43:1-2** *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."*

**Isa 46:4** *Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*

**Isa 50:9** *It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.*

### **III. Isaiah 46:05–07 The Powerlessness of False Gods**

False gods are worthless, for they are unable to help their followers and powerless to save their worshippers. Six facts prove their powerlessness:

1. Idols *are not* like the LORD nor equal with the LORD (v. 5). As the living and true God, the LORD is able to help His people by strengthening them through all the difficult situations and worldly enticements of life. Idols cannot do this, for they are neither true nor living.
2. Idols *are only* the creation of a person's mind (v. 6a). An honest, realistic evaluation of idols reveals that every idol has its beginning in people's thoughts. When people conceive an idea of who God is and what He does, a god is born in their minds. Sadly, most people worship the gods of their own imagination rather than the LORD. The LORD alone has revealed Himself in His Holy Word, the Bible, and has come to earth to reveal Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ.

3. Idols *are only* material objects or ideas that are made or conceived by mere man (v. 7). In some cases, craftsmen manufacture an idol out of gold or silver, and people bow down to worship it. But today, most people worship the idols of their own thoughts such as...

- athletes
- sex
- movie stars
- wealth
- models
- possessions
- sports
- comfort, a life of ease
- television
- religion
- recreation
- family or other loved one

A person's idol is whatever receives the primary devotion and commitment of that person's heart, whatever consumes that person's life. The LORD, the true and living God, demands our highest devotion and commitment, our best time, and the greatest energy of our bodies. If we give our greatest devotion, commitment, time and energy to something else, we place that thing ahead of God. If a person or thing, not the LORD, becomes first in our lives, it is an idol, an object of our own creation that we worship.

4. Idols *are unable* to carry people through life; instead, they have to be carried.

Consider any of the idols already mentioned or any other idol in the minds or possessions of people. In all cases, idols have to be carried by their creators or worshippers, whether in their minds or in their hands. Idols are lifeless, totally incapable of helping or carrying anyone through the severe hardships or wicked snares of this world.

5. Idols *cannot move*. They have no ability to move for they exist only in the mind of the worshipper or else at the spot where they sit. Lifeless and immobile, idols are not able to help, guide, protect or provide for people.

6. Idols *cannot answer* people who cry out to them for help. Nor can idols save those people when they face great problems. No matter how much people pray or how loudly they cry when in distress, idols cannot answer them. Idols cannot deliver or rescue them. Idols can do nothing. They have no life; consequently, they are worthless, utterly useless to their worshippers. Idols are absolutely nothing like the LORD, who is the true and living God. Because He lives, He can give believers supernatural strength to walk through any circumstances, no matter how difficult or frightening. And when believers face the final trial of life, which is death, God gives them the wonderful promise of being immediately transferred into His presence (2 Tim 4:18).

*Acts 17:23-31* For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the LORD of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they

*should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'*

*"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."*

**Rom 1:20-25** *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 men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.*

**1 Cor 8:4** *So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, (as indeed there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one LORD, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*

**1 Cor 12:1-3** *Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is LORD," except by the Holy Spirit.*

**Isa 45:20-22** *"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. Declare what is to be, present it — let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me; a righteous God and a Saviour; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."*

**Jer 10:5-6** *Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good. No one is like you, LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power.*

#### IV. *Isaiah 46:08–13 The Strong Appeal to Idolaters*

God issued both a strong appeal and a strong warning to all idolaters. They must immediately take three steps to become acceptable to Him and to escape His coming judgment. These three steps are clearly marked by Scripture:

1. Idolaters must remember that they are sinners, transgressors, rebels before God. Note that God Himself is still speaking. It is God who calls idolaters “rebels” — a most serious charge. During Isaiah’s day, most of the people in the world were worshipping idols, including most of the Israelites. Practically every Israelite professed to believe in the LORD. To their own minds they were worshipping the LORD, but what they were really worshipping was their own idea of who God is. They rejected God’s righteousness and His holy commandments, choosing instead to live immoral and wicked lives.

The false worship practiced by their neighbours appealed to the Israelites. These religions allowed people to live as they wanted, fulfilling their fleshly desires for more and more...

- possessions and wealth
- pleasure and recreation
- power and honour

Most of the Jews followed a religion that mixed the worship of God with the worship of idols. They accepted only part of God’s revelation of Himself, rejecting His righteousness and His demand for them to live righteously. As a result, their religion became eclectic, a mixture of the truth and error. Although they considered themselves to be followers of the LORD, they had become idolaters. Rejecting God’s full revelation of Himself, they became *rebels*.

Again, it was the LORD Himself making this harsh but accurate charge against those who professed to worship Him. Idolaters must remember this and prove themselves mature men and women by turning away from idolatry. They must not act like children, who are too young to know the truth. They must take responsibility for their behaviour. They are transgressors who are rebelling against the only living and true God.

2. Idolaters must remember God’s works down through history, for His former works prove that He is the LORD, the only living and true God (vv. 9-11). Time and again, the LORD has demonstrated that He alone is God. He has demonstrated His existence and power throughout history, beginning with Creation. He demonstrated His power in the great flood of Noah’s day, in the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery, in the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and in the choosing of Abraham to be the father of several great nations, but especially in the *promised seed*, which was fulfilled in Christ and in those who believe and follow Him. These are just a few of the marvellous works of God that idolaters must remember, for God’s mighty works prove His existence and power.

From the beginning of human history, God has revealed the truth to man and foretold important future events, even those that will take place at the end of the world. Many of the events have already taken place, giving further evidence that God alone is the LORD, the only living and true God. His purpose and plan for His people, those who truly believe and follow Him, will come to pass. As Isaiah stood there proclaiming this prophecy to his audience, God gave him insight into the future. Isaiah predicted that the LORD would raise up a “bird of prey” — a world leader — from the east to fulfil His purpose (v. 11). This was a direct reference to King Cyrus of Persia (41:2-3, 25). God would raise up Cyrus for two very specific purposes: to execute the LORD’s judgment on idolaters and to free His people from the Babylonian captivity(13:17-14:2). To give full assurance, God gave a double guarantee that these two events would take place:

=>“I have spoken...I will also bring it to pass.”

=> “I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

3. Idolaters must listen to the LORD (vv. 12-13). Three compelling reasons are given why they must listen:
  - a. Idolaters are stubborn, and they are far from righteousness. Although they profess to know the LORD, they are actually worshipping idols, the creation of their thoughts and the figment of their imagination. They are not living lives of righteousness by obeying the commandments of God. Instead of treating people justly, they are lying, stealing, cheating and falsely accusing. Instead of living moral and pure lives, they are forsaking the natural use of sex and committing all kinds of illicit behaviour, including fornication, adultery and homosexuality. God warns idolaters, and they must listen, for they have become stubborn, hard-hearted and far from righteousness.

**Rom 1:18-32** *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men 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 men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned*

*natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

**Rom 2:10-18** *But glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favouritism. All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares. Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law.*

**2 Th 2:8-12** *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders. And in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*

**Heb 3:13** *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

**2 Pet 2:13-14** *They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, revelling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed — an accursed brood!*

**1 John 3:4** *Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.*

**Gen 6:5** *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*

**Psa 10:4** *In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.*

**Psa 53:3** *Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

**Isa 64:6-7** *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

- b. Idolaters must listen because God is bringing His righteousness near, right next to them, right at their hand. Because righteousness will be so close, the idolater will be without excuse if he continues to reject God. This was a clear prediction of God's power to set the Jews free from their captivity in Babylon. But it was also a prediction that pointed forward to God's gift of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. The Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, would embody the very righteousness of God Himself. Christ would demonstrate God's righteousness before the entire world. And the world would be without excuse if they rejected Christ, the very image of God's righteousness.

**Rom 3:21-26** *But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

**2 Cor 5:21** *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Heb 4:15** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

**Heb 7:25-26** *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

**Phil 3:8-10** *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my LORD, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ. And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in*

*Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.*

**1 Pet 1:18-19** *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

**1 Pet 2:22-24** *He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”*

**Psa 45:7** *You love righteousness, and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.*

**Jer 23:5** *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.”*

- c. The idolater must listen because God is ready to save Zion and give His glory to Israel. This is a clear prediction of God’s coming salvation. All who truly believed the LORD would be rescued, set free from the coming Babylonian captivity. When the event actually happened, not many truly believed the LORD or still placed their hope in the promised land. Most — the vast majority — stayed behind in Babylon. They had become comfortable, prosperous and wrapped up in the world of unbelievers. And as this prophecy indicates, many had become devoted to the idolatrous worship of the world.

But God warned the idolaters: the LORD’s salvation was at hand. He was ready to bring the oppression and captivity of His people to an end. The great day of salvation and the glorification of His people was approaching. Thus the idolaters stood forewarned: they will miss out on God’s wonderful salvation and the coming glory promised to true believers and worshippers of the LORD. This is a strong warning to all idolaters and unbelievers of every generation. God’s Holy Word declares that the climactic day of God’s salvation, the deliverance of His people from the bondages of this earth, is coming. Soon the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, will return to earth to close the pages of human history. In that day, a most wonderful event will take place: all righteous believers will be glorified.

**Mat 13:43** *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”*

**Rom 8:16-17** *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit, that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

**Phil 3:20-21** *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the LORD Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

**Col 3:4** *When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

**1 Pet 5:1** *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.*

**Rev 7:9-10** *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

**Rev 22:5** *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the LORD God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

**Psa 91:14** *"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name."*

**Dan 12:3** *Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. ■*