

and that other gods do not even exist. He asserts that Israel has gone into exile, not through any inability of His to deliver them, but because He chose that they should suffer this punishment for their sins. He often repeats His promise to deliver them by His own hand. Most important of all, every now and then we find clear suggestions that the basic problem of sin will be dealt with by the Lord in His own complete and satisfying way.

Chapter 44 begins with a declaration of the certainty of the fulfillment of the work which God has committed to Israel His servant. In verses 1-5 we read that Jacob need not fear, for God is going to pour out His Spirit upon the seed of Israel and to bring into existence a great multitude of descendants, springing up as willows by the water courses; "one shall say, I am the LORD's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob."

This presentation of God's plan for the future inevitably raises in the minds of the listeners the old, and yet ever important question, how do we know that God is able to perform this? Consequently, verse 6 declares once more His omnipotence and the fact that He alone is God. In verses 7 and 8 He brings forward as proof of this the fact of His omniscience; His ability to predict the future, as we have seen, is stressed more in this part of Isaiah than anywhere else in the Bible.

In verses 9-20, we revert to the familiar theme of the vanity of the idol worship. Vividly the prophet points out the folly of worshipping something that man himself has made. How absurd it is (v. 15) to use part of a tree as fuel for a fire with which to warm oneself, to use another portion for baking bread, and out of still a third portion to make a god and worship it! Even in our own day this passage has been of use to missionaries as they seek to convert worshippers of idols. In verse 21, the prophet turns to His servant Israel and exhorts him to remember the vanity of idol worship. We have just been reading how the heathen formed their gods. Here in contrast it is stated that God Himself has formed Israel. Verses 22 and 23 declare that God will bring to an end the cause of all of Israel's suffering. He is going to blot out their transgressions.