

## Isaiah 44:6-8 One God!

August 2020

### **Isaiah 44:6-8** ESV

*Besides Me There Is No God*

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.”

### **Introduction:**

True consistent monotheism came gradually.

In first part of the Bible we find what has been described as ‘Practical monotheism’.

By the time of the Sinai Covenant the tribal god of ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob demanded to be the only god they served.

However, once in the land -and then as a geo-political nation- that proved very hard to impossible to maintain.

The history of the OT books such as Deuteronomy, Chronicles and Kings tell the checkered story ending in gradual dismemberment of the nation and eventually the exile of what remained as Judah in Babylon.

In my mind the exiles in Babylon did what many Jewish inmates of the concentration camps did. They asked: how did this happen to us? What is God saying to us now? What is the lesson? Where is the hope?

Into that 6<sup>th</sup> century BC conversation ministered the prophet Isaiah.

Through many chapters of the book that bears his name there is a legal process running.

The dramatic setting for much of this book is the court room.

The Prophet declares that in the Council of the LORD, in God’s heavenly court, Israel has been called to account and put on trial. This involves challenging the wrong thinking involved and setting out her errors.

I hear it starting in chapter 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 like crimson,  
they shall become like wool.

Israel is obviously guilty.

That is not the question.

This trial is about Israel's redemption, about exposing what led to this disaster, enabling repentance and establishing hope.

God's justice is more than punishment which is obviously already happening in a harsh exile at the hands of the Babylonians.

**Text:**

So, in a few verses as we heard today, a courtroom herald or messenger for the prosecution of Israel speaks on behalf of Yahweh whom he formally names as the source of what is coming.

<sup>6</sup> 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.  
<sup>7</sup> Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.  
Let him declare and set it before me,

This is another invitation to dispute with the great I AM.  
Yahweh is saying through his messenger that: He is all there is as God.

"I am the first and I am the last;  
besides me there is no god.

This represents an upgrade of what had been the working theology of practical monotheism.

It's as if Israel had believed in marriage with Yahwah as an open relationship or even polygamy. The case is being made for marriage with Yahweh as being monogamy because Yahweh is, and always has been, the one and only God. This applies not only for Israel but for all humanity and all the peoples.

This was nothing new but it was time for Israel to get with the program!

So, the redeemer of Israel, the one who rescues her from captivity and sustains her, who claims to be her Redeemer and King is inviting other pretenders or claimants to the majesty of 'God' to stand up and make their case.

Israel is twice called as a witness in support of Yahweh's claim.

...since I appointed an ancient people.  
Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.  
<sup>8</sup> 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."

Israel's history, ancient and future declares that she does not know what will happen but when she rests on Yahweh, she has a future, a solid future because she stands on the one true rock – The Lord God has been and will be her Redeemer and King.

## Application

This short speech is part of the much larger legal hearing. (*See appendix*)

What I want to leave you with is something of what the entire case still means for the world today. I mentioned that Israel had practiced practical monotheism.

That was one God at a time with the possibility of engaging others if deemed beneficial.

That is still common for many today: a little Jesus, with a bit of hedonism with some self-help spirituality or materialism and what ever idol or drug we indulge in with nice values to live by.

The acceptance of there only being one God, the Lord Yahweh, gave rise to what is named as 'Ethical monotheism'.

So from one god at a time -whatever may take serve as 'god'- to there is only one God and that must be adjusted to.

This brought something with it that lies at the heart of all modern science and technology.

If there is only one God who created the universe as a righteous and orderly designer there are implications:

#1 There is only one mind, one person or being providing the ground for existence.

The cosmos is not run by a committee or some political process that can change as things do on earth. Whatever constants there are have been instituted and are maintained by One God and one only.

To make 2 bold claims towards clarity:

- a) Polytheists cannot be scientists without departing from their world view.
  - a. They may be functional monotheists at work but once away from scientifically based work it's back to polytheism and any god will do.
- b) Atheists can only be scientists by accepting the implications of monotheism while not acknowledging where those assumptions came from.
  - a. There are cosmic and universal laws because there is a cosmic universal law giver.

Whether people today believe in God or not, the historic point at which some people began to see the universe as formed and governed by a single consistent being who overarches time is here. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC Israel began to look at its world through these lenses. Through the centuries this would develop and Christians would inherit that world-view to eventually be transformed by it.

Monotheism provides the essential assumption for what came to be science as we know it.

To end with another bold claim, Science as a confident investigation of reality can only proceed if reality is consistent and knowable. That is what Yahweh claimed as the one and only God. That knowledge of God is what Israel learned but it did not come easy.

It starts here in ethical monotheism!

And for us as little people, like flies on the big earth, this one and only God is our rock inviting us to stand on him as the only rock among the shifting sands.

Amen.

**APPENDIX**

The theme of 40-55 is God takes idols out of Israel.

- a. 40:1-11-deliverance coming
- b. 40:12-31-God is better than idols
- c. 41:1-7-deliverance coming
- d. 41:8-20-Israel need not be afraid
- e. 41:21-29-God is better than idols
- f. 42:1-12-deliverance coming
- g. 42:13-17-deliverance coming
- h. 42:18-25-God addresses Israel's sin
  - 1. 43:1-7-Israel need not be afraid
  - 2. 43:8-13-God is better than idols
- i. 43:14-21-deliverance coming
- j. 43:22-28-God addresses Israel's sin
- k. 44:1-5-Israel need not be afraid
- l. 44:6-20-God is better than idols
- m. 44:21-23-deliverance coming
- n. 44:24-45:8-deliverance coming
- o. 45:9-19-God is better than idols
- p. 45:20-25-God is better than idols