

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 45:18-21, SAVIOR OF JEW AND GENTILE, PART 2

In the previous verses, God confirmed the truth that He was going to use a pagan king to set the Israelites free from the Babylonian captivity. Using that as a type, He looked far into the future to reveal, not only the Kingdom destiny of Jew and Gentile, but the eternal destiny of both Jew and Gentile. The release from Babylonian captivity was a great thing in the history of Israel and in the fulfillment of God's Kingdom plan for history, but the end times release from the captivity of the satanic Babylonian world system is an even greater antitype that is awaiting fulfillment to this day. When that happens the believing remnant of Israel, which includes the resurrected Old Testament believers, will realize the fulfillment of the unconditional covenant promises, the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom, and they will finally be what they were created to be: the head nation of the world and a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation representing Yahweh to the world.

In the next verse, the fact that Yahweh is the Creator God is presented as affirmation that the eternal destinies of Jew and Gentile will be what they were just revealed to be: an everlasting salvation for believing Israel and the proclamation that Gentiles will be divided between those who acknowledge Israel's God as the one true God and those who refuse to do so and therefore continue in their rebellion to their doom. The God who created the world by means of the spoken Word is certainly capable of bringing the things to pass He is revealing in these Scriptures. Those things include the restoration and salvation of national Israel, the salvation of individual Israelites who experience justification salvation as part of national Israel, and the salvation of individual Gentiles. No other god, even if other gods exist, which they do not, can cause things to come to pass; He is the only God who has the power to create things from nothing. He is the only God who can fix what was broken by mankind in the beginning. False gods are all derived from what is broken, that is, they are the product of what God originally created but is now fallen. False gods are therefore inherently broken as well.

Once again, many commentators want to claim that these Scriptures are only about Cyrus and his role in releasing Israel from their Babylonian captivity. And, once again, the events described do not fit the events that accompanied the release and return of the Israelites to their land. These things are clearly speaking about an eschatological series of events that have yet to take place. If nothing else, the inclusion of Gentiles in God's salvation program was not part of Israel's release from the Babylonian captivity.

"The setting of this and the previous message is unknown, but the eschatological orientation of this proclamation of salvation in 45:22-25 should cause the reader to disconnect it from anything related to Cyrus. This message about the future offers great comfort and encouragement to the prophet's Hebrew audience. God began to institute his plan long ago when he first created the heaven and the earth. He will successfully complete it on that final day when every knee shall bow before him. Comfort for every believer is available in knowing that God has planned the future and will accomplish it" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 274].

“The fulness of the Gentiles, which enters into the kingdom of God, is a remnant of the whole mass of the heathen: for salvation comes through judgment; and it is in the midst of great calamities that the work of that heathen mission is accomplished, which is represented in these prophecies on the one hand as the mission of Cyrus, and on the other hand as the mission of Jehovah and His servant. Hence this summons to listen to the self-assertion of the God of revelation, is addressed to the escaped of the heathen, who are not therefore converted, but those who are susceptible of salvation, and therefore spared” [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:449].

Isaiah 45:18 ¹⁸For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God [הַאֱלֹהִים]) who formed the earth and made it, He established it *and* did not create it a waste place, *but* formed it to be inhabited), “I am the LORD, and there is none else.

It is noteworthy how frequently Isaiah relates the fact that Yahweh is the Creator God to His promises for Israel, the world, and the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. Notice that He is specifically said to be “the God” [הַאֱלֹהִים], the Creator God. He is not just any god and no other being exists who is truly god anyway. He is the one true Creator God of the universe. It is not biblically possible to separate the God of the creation from the God of history; therefore, the Bible does not, cannot, accommodate any suggestion of evolution, including theistic evolution, which removes God from the Genesis 1 *ex nihilo* creation account. Idol worship is worthless; gods born of the rebellious and sin driven mind of man, created beings worshiping the creation, have no power to create and they have no power to save. God has the evidence to prove who He is and to show that which only He alone can do. What do powerless idols and the gods they represent have? Nothing! They cannot create anything out of nothing and they cannot accurately predict the future and bring it to pass. He is the only true God and there is no other omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God in existence. Satan is called the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), but he is a god only to the extent that he fancies himself to be god and therefore has convinced mankind to follow him as though he is a real god, but that is an illusion just as all the idols are illusions. He is a created being and is not god in any true sense of the word.

God created the world with a purpose. He created it to be inhabited by mankind who were commanded to rule over it on behalf of the Creator. Man rebelled against God and lost his right to rule and manage God's creation, but the things being revealed in Isaiah, indeed, in the Bible, are all about God's plan to restore mankind to the leadership/stewardship positions man was created to fulfill.

“For” links this verse with what comes before it, and “thus says the LORD” indicates the gravity of what follows. Four verbs are used here to say that God created, formed, established, and made the universe culminating in its creation as we know it, although now in a fallen state. The word created, בָּרָא, is specifically a revelation of God's power to create something from nothing. Together, these verbs reveal that there is a design that was carried out to perfection which resulted in the creation as it was originally envisioned in the mind of God. These words reveal the unique attributes of God that no other being can possibly possess. “[H]e initiated (*created*), moulded into shape (*fashioned*, [*formed*] as a

potter would) until all was completed (*made*) and he imparted stability to the whole (*founded [established]*)" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 290].

Many theologians use this verse, by quoting "did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited," as a proof text to "prove" the gap theory doctrine of the creation account. The details may vary from theologian to theologian in this theory, but in general, it posits that God created the earth and filled it with precious stones and dinosaurs, and it was destroyed when Satan, who was appointed ruler over the Genesis 1:1 earth, rebelled which resulted in the idea of a "waste place" found in this verse which is otherwise thought to be the "formless and void" condition of Genesis 1:2. In this theory, this first creation of earth lasted for millions or billions of years, although some allow for only a few thousand years. According to the larger number of years, the theory accommodates the so-called scientific "certainty" of the old earth's age. This verse does not prove that situation at all. The term "formless and void" relates to the beginning point of the creation week in Genesis 1:1 which progressively moved from the beginning when the first stage of creation began culminating in the final stage of creation which ended on the sixth day. "Even in Gen. 1:2, *chaos* is not described as of God's creation, because ... the creative activity of God merely made use of this as a starting point ..." [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:449]. The Bible indicates that sin and death came into the world via Adam. If the gap theory is true, then sin and death predate Adam which is not a biblically viable understanding of Scripture concerning the Fall.

Romans 5:12 ¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

1 Corinthians 15:21 ²¹For since by a man came death ...

"Paraphrasing, the message [Is. 45:18] can be read: 'God created not the earth [to be] forever unformed and uninhabited, He formed it to be inhabited.' The creation narrative in Genesis 1 tells the steps by which He brought form to the unformed earth and living inhabitants to its empty surface. There is certainly no contradiction with the statement in Genesis 1:2 that the initial creation was of basic elements rather than a completed system. The initial creation was not perfect in the sense that it was complete, but it was perfect for that first stage of God's six-day plan of creation. Likewise the word *bohu* does not connote a desolation, but simply 'emptiness.' When initially created, the earth had no inhabitants; it was 'void'. The essential meaning therefore, is: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth [or space and matter], and the matter so created was at first unformed and uninhabited.' ... Initially there were no stars or planets, only the basic matter component of the space-matter-time continuum. The elements which were to be formed into the planet Earth were at first only elements, not yet *formed* but nevertheless comprising the basic matter—the 'dust' of the earth." [Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific & devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings*, 49-50].

"God brought matter into being, connoted the heavens and the earth, and then out of an undistinguished mass, shaped it by separate, successive, progressive steps into a habitation for man imminently suited to his needs ..." [Harold G. Stigers, *A Commentary on Genesis*, 50].

I use the figurative expression of an artist's blank canvas which is formless and void as far as a painting is concerned, but which is also the foundation upon which a painting will progressively be revealed as the painter moves from the beginning to the end of the process during which he will complete his painting. The fact is, the gap theory is not a creation theory; it is a creation, ruin, re-creation theory; therefore, it is also known as the "ruin-and-reconstruction theory" or the "pre-Adamic cataclysm theory." The gap theory has to accommodate two separate acts of divine, *ex nihilo* creation, and Genesis 1 does not accommodate that scenario.

God did not create the world to be a waste place; He created it to be the place upon which mankind would live and serve Him and be part of God's family. The point of this sentence is that God specifically formed the world to be an inhabited place. He did not create it to be a lifeless sphere hanging out in the universe He created; He did not create the world just to leave it a place void of life.

Chaos does not explain the beginning of what was an event of enormous significance. God had a purpose for His creation and that formless and void state was the beginning of the realization of that purpose which was for the earth to be a Kingdom of God, a mediatorial Kingdom, administered by man which was to be the home of plant, animal, and human life all of which were originally designed to glorify His name and in which mankind and the Creator God would peacefully coexist.

God did not begin the creation week with chaos; nothing existed before that week began. Oswalt had an interesting understanding of pagan theology as it relates to the concept of chaos. According to him, the starting point of paganism is chaos; it is not order, which is obviously the opposite of God's standard operating procedure. "Because paganism refuses to admit of a God who stands outside the cosmos, it must posit that the beginning of all things was matter in chaos. Out of this chaos the gods emerged. The ordering of the chaos was something of an afterthought on the part of the gods to protect themselves from the ever-present danger of its reemergence. Humans are even more of an afterthought, created primarily to take care of the gods. Since the gods have no commitment to and accept no responsibility for humans, they have no interest in communicating with them. If humans wish to divine the future, they must resort to mediums, wizards, and necromancers" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 218]. God is therefore arguing against the idea that His creation began in chaos or fell into chaos as paganism sees it.

"Again the Lord affirmed that He created the heavens, and there is no other God beside Him. These affirmations indicate that what follows substantiates what has gone before. God is trustworthy, and will not embarrass or humiliate His worshippers, because He is the almighty Creator. Isaiah's elaboration on this statement stresses that God's creative activity was for the welfare of His creatures" [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:130].

God has revealed Himself to mankind beginning with the creation (Rom. 1:18-20). Israel has been particularly blessed by the special revelation of God. Israel did not have to seek to know God; He revealed Himself to them in powerful ways that began with Abraham. The Israelites have been the recipients of mighty signs, wonders, and miracles in addition

to the Word God spoke through the prophets. They are in an advantageous position compared to the Gentiles of the world who have to grope for God, a God that has become unfamiliar to them (Acts 17:23) even though they know Him. God always deals in righteousness; His revelation can be nothing but truth.

Isaiah 45:19 ¹⁹"I have not spoken in secret, In some dark land; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek Me in a waste place'; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, Declaring things that are upright.

The Gentile world pretends to think that God is hidden from them (Is. 45:15), but He is not. They know Him, but they reject Him; there is a huge difference between those two concepts. It was Israel's assignment to make Him known to the world, but they failed to accomplish their assignment. It is true that the Gentiles did not receive the special revelation that Israel received before and during the writing of the canon of Scripture, but God's work with Israel as an individual entity not numbered among the nations of the world (Num. 23:9) also serves to reveal Him to the Gentiles (Is. 45:6). Israel is a nation different from all others and the world knows it, which is why the world is so intent on destroying Israel because to completely destroy Israel results in Satan defeating God. Of course, God sits in the heavens and laughs at the world's foolish plans (Ps. 2:4) to overcome Him and His plan for world history.

Psalms 2:4 ⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.

Because the Gentiles have rejected the revelation of God, both general and, since the completion of the canon of Scripture, special revelation, they have resorted to the darkness of paganism. Pagans operate from a position of spiritual darkness which is in opposition to God who is light and who operates from a position of light. God speaks and He speaks openly in ways that are generally not difficult for everyone to understand. The only reason there are so many differences among people about the meaning of God's Word has to do with literal hermeneutics. People want to impose their particular theology onto the Word of God and interpret it based on that theology rather than allowing their theology to be developed based on the Word of God. Dispensational theology is the only system that has successfully accomplished that mission.

Romans 1:22–23 ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

"Unlike the obscure and mumbling utterances of the idol-worshipping prognosticators, the revelation of Jehovah is clear and just; it is accessible to all men and not just a few, who are initiated, as in the pagan mysteries" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 366].

As a result of God's gracious dealings with Jacob's offspring, they did not have to resort to consulting dark spiritual forces to know the truth. They did that, but they did not have to do it; the truth was right in front of them all along. They did it simply due to the fact that they had rejected not only the revelation they had been given, but the God who had given it. "Israel (*Jacob*) did not discover God through the manipulation of the spirits in

secret places of darkness. Rather, God has initiated the conversation, speaking clearly in ways that can be clearly verified. Thus it has been shown in history that God speaks the plain truth. This is not the case with the gods" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66* 218].

Darkness is used in figurative way to refer to the lost state of mankind, which is in contrast to the state of walking in the light which characterizes people who are believers. "Light" particularly describes Christ who is the Light of the world.

Acts 26:18 ¹⁸to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God ...

John 1:4-5 ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 8:12 ¹²Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Darkness refers to everything that we would consider to be spiritually harmful. The Day of the Lord is described as "a day of darkness and gloom" (Joel 2:2). Righteousness is a characteristic of those who walk in the light and darkness breeds that which is unfruitful.

Ephesians 5:8-13 ⁸for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹²for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

Concerning darkness, God operates in the light and He has done so in His dealings with Israel. They have been blessed with not only the light of general revelation, but with the light of special revelation. At times, it seems as though God is hiding from them (cf. Is. 1:15), but that is part of His divine disciplinary program for His wayward nation; therefore, that should not have been a surprise to them. Besides, there is much about God that mankind is not privileged to know. God gets to decide how much we know and how much about Him remains hidden from our view. That is His divine prerogative.

Along that line of thinking, some theologians do not believe there is a connection here with the darkness of paganism. Instead, they insist that this is simply an indication that, at times, God speaks in ways that may be hard to understand. "There are some aspects of God's person and his sovereign ways that are hidden from people, but the reason some think that God appears to be hidden is because they are blind and stubbornly refuse to listen to what God did say. God did speak openly on Mount Sinai, but at other times he spoke in dark (secret) ways that were hard for people to understand.... Something done in the darkness is simply something done 'in secret, in hiding,' for both refer to something that is not clear. God is saying that his communication of himself, his will, and his plans were not imperceptible, inaudible, unrecognizable, or impossible to understand. He spoke clearly to the Israelites through Moses and the prophets" [Gary V. Smith, *The New*

American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66, 276]. One problem with this thought is that the verse begins by saying that God did not speak in secret. While this is generally an accurate statement, it seems that the reference to darkness must have some relevance in relation to the darkness of pagan "wisdom" so-called due to the wider context in this section of Isaiah that has had a great deal to say about paganism and pagan thought. The light and dark, good and evil dichotomy here is relevant.

God's Word is faithful and true; it is righteous and upright. It is not obscured by darkness or lost in a vast wasteland. Israel has no excuse; the nation has been privileged to receive special revelation initiated by God. They did not have to seek it out; it was graciously provided them.

Many theologians believe the correct understanding of "waste place" in this verse is "in vain." In this context, that seems to be correct. God's Word reveals His purposes; revelation has not been in vain. Of course, the majority of the world's population, Jew and Gentile, reject it at this time in history, but it is nevertheless true, and it does point to the fulfillment of history as it is revealed in the Word of God. Since the Messianic Kingdom begins with only believers entering it, the Word of God will, at that time, be accepted by the Kingdom people populating the world. The provision of the Word of God is not and will not be in vain—not then, not now, not ever.

Jew and Gentile have received God's revelation in one way or another, and He has plans for both groups of people. One of the stipulations of the Abrahamic Covenant makes this very clear.

Genesis 12:3 ³And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

There is a process that will take place before the ultimate blessing, justification salvation and Kingdom inauguration accompanied by the restoration of the creation, is fully realized, but it will happen. Much of this is revealed in terms of ancient Babylon, but keep in mind that ancient Babylon, a kingdom confined to the Middle East, is a type of the one world Babylon of the end times. One is painting a picture for us of the other. The verses we are moving into now are eschatological in nature. This is not about Cyrus and the release of the Israelites from the ancient Babylonian captivity. Once again, these verses are discussing issues that have yet to be fulfilled.

To much of the world—then, now, and in the future—it looks as though the Babylonian system, which is always an antichrist system doing the bidding of Satan, has defeated God and His plan for history. But the world is viewing things from the standpoint of everything that is fallen and the world's viewpoint is therefore sinful and lacking in wisdom. God's wisdom confounds the world because the world lacks spiritual wisdom, which is wisdom that is informed and guided by God and His revelation as opposed to the foolishness of the world that has embraced Satan's rebellious worldview.

1 Corinthians 1:23 ²³but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

1 Corinthians 2:14–16 ¹⁴But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. ¹⁵But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. ¹⁶FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

The world, instead of glorying in the false gods of the world system, should be turning to the Creator God of the universe for salvation. There is no safety, physical or spiritual, to be found within the world's system of governance and spirituality. In this section of Isaiah, God has been telling the world, Jew and Gentile, over and over again that He is the only God and only in Him is any kind of salvation found.

A contrast is presented between gods of wood (created material) that cannot save and the one true Creator God who can save. The evidence supporting the Creator God is found in the fact that He could predict the future and bring it to pass. He therefore issues an invitation to turn to Him and be saved. His Word, founded in His righteousness, is true and turning to Him will, in fact, result in salvation. Many will refuse His offer, but some will accept it and be saved. These verses are forensic in nature which suggests a courtroom type of debate setting between parties in which pagans are once again invited to state their case before God. Because these verses are eschatological in nature, the verse is revealing that God is summoning those people of the world who have survived the Tribulation up to this point. Buksbazen correctly views this as “an invitation to the pagan survivors, those who will remain at the cataclysmic end of time” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 366]. Presumably, given the judgments imposed on the world that people know are from God (Rev. 6:15-17), many of them may have reached the point where they are willing to listen to the truth being set before them.

Isaiah 45:20 ²⁰“Gather yourselves and come; Draw near together, you fugitives [פְּלִיטִים] of the nations; They have no knowledge [יָדַעַתְּ], Who carry about their wooden idol And pray to a god who cannot save.

This verse begins with three imperative verbs: gather, come, and draw which are addressed to the people of the world. The words “fugitive” and “nations,” plural, indicate that a time of worldwide trouble is the context which reinforces the eschatological nature of the verse. Most theologians view this as more of an invitation than as a command, and perhaps at this point in the history of the world, many of the people still alive will be willing to listen to what God has to say to them.

Fugitive, פְּלִיטִים, means an escaped one, one who escapes by flight, a fugitive, or a survivor. The sense is that of a person who flees from an uncongenial situation. It indicates persons or groups who have lived through a dangerous situation; survivors or those who have escaped what might have been a sure death. In this form, the word always refers to someone who has escaped from a calamity, a survivor in battle or war. Additionally, it not only pictures the escape from mortal danger, but it may also picture arrival at a place or condition of security. This is a good description of those who have survived the Tribulation at any point along the way, but particularly in the second half or towards the end which seems to be the setting the context demands.

Young recognized the eschatological nature of this verse. “[T]he assembly is not to take place at a distance but the escaped of the nations are to draw near that they may hear what the God of Israel has to say. The address is made to the escaped ones of the Gentiles, i.e., those of the Gentile nations that have escaped the judgment of God. In the redemption and deliverance of Israel judgment will also fall on the Gentiles. The reference is not to any particular victory of Cyrus, but to the great victory when the ‘prince of this world is cast out.’ It is a remnant of the heathen that constitutes the fullness of the Gentiles, and it is this escaped remnant that is commanded to come together” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:213].

Idolaters are characterized as those who have no knowledge. Of course, we know that every person knows God (Rom. 1:18-21); therefore, they knowingly reject the knowledge they have of God which is a something a fool does. They know they make their idol gods out of material that is already created; a piece of wood is a piece of wood and it cannot possibly be a god that possesses any power. It is inanimate, inert, lifeless, subject to rot and decay, and powerless. Idols have no intelligence rendering them the opposite of omniscient. It even has to be carried around to get anywhere to any specific geographical location; it is not omnipresent. In terms of life during the Tribulation, mankind has all the knowledge they need to know, by means of personal experience, that an omnipotent true God is judging the world. Idols have no attributes of God and even a fool can recognize that, but they believe idols are gods because they want to believe it. They have willingly submitted to the world’s false, deceptive, definition of knowledge and rejected the true basis for all knowledge. How much intelligence does it take to know that a piece of wood cannot save anyone from anything? That applies to both physical and spiritual salvation. Knowledge is not just about facts either. The Hebrew word, יָדַע, also contains elements of awareness, realization, and perception all of which may be deliberately altered or subverted by forces of indoctrination whether they are societal, cultural, educational, religious, political, and so on. All of these things come into play concerning the mindset of the world’s pagans toward the end of the Tribulation.

“Certainly anyone who is thinking critically about this issue would realize that these wooden idols are worthless gods, for they do not have the ability to save those who pray to them” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 277]. What we cannot see and what fallen people have a difficult time understanding and accepting, is the damage the sin nature has done to our ability to think, to know, and to reason and the degree of animosity it has placed in the hearts and minds of mankind in rebellion.

James 4:4 ⁴You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Once again, a call to debate the issue is proclaimed. This is the same challenge issued earlier in Isaiah 41:21-24.

Isaiah 45:21 ²¹“Declare and set forth *your* case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not [אֲנִי יְהוָה] I, the LORD?

And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me.

This call may seem to be based on some sort of ability for the world and those immersed in its satanic worldview to reason logically and truthfully, but, due to mankind's rebellion, that is difficult to do. Mankind can never win an argument with the God who is only and completely true and righteous. Unbelieving people cannot reason according to logic and truth which are birthed in the God of logic and truth. One thing the world can always do, however, is conspire together to oppose God and His truth. What individual people, operating according to the dictates of the world system, can also do is appropriately respond to absolute truth, when the truth is presented to the world by God Himself, as God draws people to Him by means of His drawing ministry (John 6:44), the Son's work on the cross to draw people to Himself (John 12:32) and the Holy Spirit's convicting ministry (John 16:8). Of course, God knows all that; therefore, we have to believe that He is, one final time, gathering the world together so that they may once again hear the truth and have the chance to appropriately respond to it. There does not seem to be any time allotted for the nations to present their case although that may be an argument made from silence and therefore it could be incorrect. "But there is no need to imagine that there was a literal trial of the nations, for before any evidence can be found, organized, and presented by the nations, God provides the results of his own research into this issue by putting his answer in the form of a rhetorical question. 'Was it not I, the LORD?' means, 'Surely, it was I, the LORD.' ... Sentences that begin with הֲלוֹא 'is it not' are used to show that something is absolutely true" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 277 and quoting Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, 277, n. 617].

In legal terms, God is presenting a *prima facie* case meaning "'at first look,' or 'on its face,' referring to a lawsuit or criminal prosecution in which the evidence before trial is sufficient to prove the case unless there is substantial contradictory evidence presented at trial.... It is a case that appears at first blush to be 'open and shut'" [<https://dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?typed=prima%20facie&type=1>, accessed 14 March 2021].

God declares one more time that He is the only true God in existence. He is the only God who can announce what is going to come to pass in the future and then see to it that it does come to pass exactly as foretold. He is the only righteous God and He is the only Savior God; therefore, there is no other God except Him. These concepts may correctly be considered attributes of God; being righteous and being Savior are elements of His identity. That is who He is, and He can be nothing else.

In several of these discussions, the primary point has been that only the one true God can predict the future and see to it that it comes to pass. This fact is presented as a primary authentication of Yahweh as the true God compared to the inauthenticity of the false gods the majority of the people worship and who cannot predict the future and ensure that it comes pass. "It is not so much God's strength that is evidence of his sole godhood, but his ability to predict the future accurately. This has been at the heart of the disputations. Many things can happen and be ascribed to the power of one's god. Whether they are evidence of such power is open to debate. But if those events have been described in advance and then occur, the likelihood of their divine origin is greatly

enhanced, to say the least. Thus the real proof of the Lord's superiority over the idols is not a matter of relative power but of his sovereignty over history" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 222].