

# LESSON 228

## GOD OF NATIONS

**Related Scripture:** Ephesians 2:11-22

**KEY VERSES:** *"And (God) hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."*—Acts 17:26, 27.

**Lesson Scripture:** Isa. 45:1-6; Amos 9:7-9; I Tim. 2:1-7

### Introduction:

Among the most vicious canards of modern seminarian antichrists is the anti-scriptural thesis that the Old Testament Jehovah was a mere tribal god of the Hebrews. To the contrary, in ancient times as in modern, true worshipers of Jehovah knew Him as Creator and Judge of all men; only the pagan worshipers of false gods were ignorant enough to imagine limitations upon the power and domain of God the Creator of heaven and earth.

Abraham knew God as "the Judge of all the earth." (Gen. 18:25.) Moses knew and taught of God as the one and only true and living God, and remarked concerning the gods of other nations that "their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." (Deut. 32:31.) David knew Him as the God from Whose omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence there was no escape. (Psalm 139; see also Psalm 2.) Such is the true God of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament we read: "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." (Ro. 3:29.)

So in our present lesson we may note that "the Judge of all the earth" is also "the Savior of the world." (I Jn. 4:14.) Scripture included in the lesson may be outlined as follows:

1. God of Destiny, Isaiah 45:1-6
  - a. Divine prophecy, 1-3
  - b. Divine purpose, 4
  - c. Divine power, 5, 6
2. God of Discipline, Amos 9:7-9
  - a. Divine providence, 7
  - b. Divine prediction, 8
  - c. Divine protection, 9
3. God of Deliverance, I Tim. 2:1-7
  - a. Divine petitions, 1, 2
  - b. Divine preference, 3, 4
  - c. Divine persons, 5, 6
  - d. Divine provision, 7

### Notes on the Printed Text:

#### God of Destiny, Isaiah 45:1-6.

Biblical prophecy is not designed to satisfy idle curiosity concerning the future, but rather by its fulfillment to confirm the faith of believers in God's word:

"I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I showed it to thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them." (Isa. 48:5.)

"Now, I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." (Jn. 13:19.)

Only because He has perfect control of events God is able to tell us in advance exactly how things will come out. True prophecy ensures precise fulfillment, and actual fulfillment demonstrates the truth of prophecy.

#### Divine Prophecy, 1-3.

Here we have an example of divine prophecy, given more than a hundred years before Cyrus was born. This great king of a heathen nation was called Jehovah's anointed, with the promise that the special blessings of divine providence would bring him to know that Jehovah was the God of Israel.

#### Divine Purpose, 4.

Blessed as he was by divine favor, Cyrus was merely an instrument of divine purpose "for Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect." God is concerned especially for His chosen people, and His eternal purposes for them must be accomplished by whatever means are necessary or good in His sight.

#### Divine Power, 5, 6.

Men may imagine other gods, but in reality there is only one God, Jehovah. Having chosen Cyrus by name long before he was born, God girded him for conquest of other nations before Cyrus knew the God that gave him his power, so that Cyrus and other people around the world might learn from fulfilled prophecy that all power is from the one true God, Jehovah.

#### God of Discipline, Amos 9:7-9.

Divine judgment upon sinners may be either punitive or disciplinary. In judging His own people for their sins, God's purpose is rather to purify than to punish, and such "punishment" or judgment may properly be called chastisement. The God of our salvation is the God of discipline.

#### Divine Providence, 7.

So far as temporal and earthly blessings are concerned, God's people have no monopoly on His goodness. Let us not become proud and presumptuous just because God has been good to us. He is good to other people too. Our Father in heaven "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Mat. 5:45.) So Amos reminded Israel that there were other nations which had enjoyed deliverance in the providence of God.

### **Divine Prediction, 8.**

Courage and faith are characteristic of the true prophet. On the one hand Amos dared to speak of Israel as "the sinful kingdom" and to predict its destruction in the name of Jehovah; but on the other hand he faithfully added the divine promise that for God's people judgment would be tempered with mercy: I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob."

### **Divine Protection, 9.**

Under the figure of sifting grain, God promised divine protection to genuine individual believers. The nation as a whole would be scattered and destroyed, but not one—not even the least—regenerated child of God would be lost in the process.

### **God of Deliverance, I Timothy 2:1-7.**

Recognition of God as our Creator and Judge would leave us in a sorry state if He were not also the God of deliverance, the God of eternal salvation for all who put their trust in Him.

### **Divine Petitions, 1, 2.**

Note the four "alls" in two verses: "first of all," "all men," "all that are in authority," and "all godliness" or piety. The practice of prayer is not to be put ahead of some other matters, but "first of all." We are not to pray merely for some men, but "for all men." Specifically, we are exhorted to pray not only for rulers that we like, but "for all that are in authority." And we are admonished to live not merely with some show of religion, but "in all piety and reverence."

### **Divine Preference, 3, 4.**

I must agree with Spurgeon that this text means what it says, and not what some theologians would like to make it say. Obviously the will of God referred to here is not absolute or purposeful, but rather conditional and directive. That is, God prefers the salvation of sinners to their destruction; and there is a sense in which this divine preference extends to all men. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. (Ezek. 33:11.)

Yet in His permissive will God permits sinners to disobey His directive will to their own destruction. See John 5:40.

### **Divine Persons, 5, 6.**

Both sin and salvation are personal matters. We have sinned personally against a personal God, and our salvation is a personal experience received from the person of God our Father through the person of the one Mediator, His Son and our Savior, the man Christ Jesus.

### **Divine Provision, 7.**

"Whereunto" refers to the testimony of Christ mentioned in verse 6. God has always provided appropriate witnesses to tell His message of salvation to others. Paul did not presumptuously assume the office of an apostle, but was divinely ordained or appointed to his work, and proved himself "a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

### **Key Verses:**

"And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."—Acts 17:26, 27.

Human blood is all of one kind, as distinguished from the blood of other creatures. Such differences as are found in human blood are more individual than national or racial. It was God Who made us so, and it was God Who determined historical epochs and geographical boundaries.

Now, men of every race and in every place ought to seek God. And since He is omnipresent, He is "not far from every one of us." But the sad fact is that men do not seek God. It is not space or race, but sin, that separates men from their Creator.