

The Lord Thy God

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Bible Text: Isaiah 43:11-21

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I'd like to invite you to look with me in your Bibles to Isaiah 43 and I'm going to read from verse 11 down to verse 21 and speak with you about the Lord thy God. In this portion he declares himself as the Lord thy God. "Thy" being for that particular people that he has chosen and for whom he sent his Son to redeem. This is the God of Scripture and beginning in verse 11, he says,

11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. 12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God. 13 Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it? 14 Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. 16 Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; 17 Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. 18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20 The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21 This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

If you remember in the last message as we considered the verses 8 leading up to verse 11, God lay down a challenge to the worshipers of idols to produce proofs why their people and those that had invented them and made them up because that's what an idol is, it's an idea of who God is, but to justify why they should even consider them to be gods. And what he's doing is calling them to court and to lay forth evidence that would give any proof why any should ever even worship such gods. That's his prerogative as God.

Many people here and across the world have followed with great interest the trial of Casey Anthony and regardless of how you feel about the outcome of that particular trial, the law was followed. There was a careful presentation by the prosecution of why they felt she was guilty and there was a careful presentation by the defense as to why she was not guilty and a jury of her peers found her not guilty. There is a call to evidence and there is a seriousness about such cases. I didn't watch it up until the end, the closing arguments, but what impressed me was the deliberation of both sides in laying out their case and why it was they either felt her guilty or not guilty.

That's the scene that we have here by our Lord in verse 8, "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears." Already God as the supreme Judge, in essence, has judged these who are worshiping false idols, in other words, they're just like them. Are not idols, do they not have eyes but can't see? You see some of these idols that they carve out, they put eyes on them but they can't see. Don't they have ears but can't hear? You see a man sitting there with a big belly sculpted out and he's got eyes and ears but they can't see. There was a missionary I read about one time, to show the people that he was endeavoring to preach to the foolishness of their idolatry, he brought from his homeland a couple of carved dogs and put them in front of his house and when the people came by they looked at those dogs and they were surprised and they asked the man, "Why do you have those dogs in front of your house?" He said, "Well, they're protecting my house." And they all started laughing. They said, "Well, those dogs can't protect your house." He said, "Yeah, look, they've got eyes. They've got ears. Look at their teeth." They all just really started laughing and they said, "You don't really believe that they could protect you, do you?" He said, "Well, why do you believe that your idols have any power at all to protect you? They're dumb idols." This is what our Lord is doing, calling these idolaters to come with their gods. Now, this is interesting because if the gods don't exist, how are they going to show up in court? It's like someone saying, "Well, I've got some witnesses. I've got some key witnesses," but come time for court, where are they? Produce them.

And the Lord says, "Let's follow the law. Let's really take a look at this." Verse 9, "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things?" In other words, "Show me one thing, one proof, one evidence, that your gods have ever done anything for you like what I have done for my people." You see, there's the comparison. Who is like unto God? Well, the obvious answer is: there is no evidence and therefore no ability to justify them worshiping them. That's what he says, "let them bring their witnesses, that they may be justified or let them hear and say, It is truth."

You know, it might stand before men what men worship and Brother Bob read that in Deuteronomy 32, if you look back there, just one particular verse that I wanted to point out to you. This is God's contention even with the children of Israel and the nations that surround them. Why would you show any interest in the gods that others worship if the Lord has taught you of the true and living God? Why would you even enter into their places of worship? Don't call them churches. They're centers of idolatry if it's not the true God. Even stronger language of Scripture calls them synagogues of Satan. That offends

them but if it's works religion and if it's anything less than Christ getting all the glory, it's nothing more than a synagogue of Satan.

Notice verse 16 of Deuteronomy. Remember, Deuteronomy was written after the Lord had caused a whole generation to perish in the desert. You say, "On what ground?" Well, verse 16, "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods." You know, there are a lot of things we hear coming out of people's mouths and we say, "Well, that's strange." Yeah, that's strange to the true and living God. "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger." Look at here, verse 17, "They sacrificed unto devils." They call it worshiping God but God calls it sacrificing unto devils. Devil worship. No more would you think of entering into sit down with them like you're doing here and open a hymnbook and sing and even if they opened a Bible and read with them as if you are in some sort of agreement with them than you would to go down in New Orleans and visit a séance of Voodooism.

"They sacrificed unto devils, not to God." Don't call it worship to God when God says it's not worship. "And to gods," little g-o-d-s, "whom they knew not," notice, "to new gods that came up newly whom your fathers feared not." In other words, your fathers didn't worship this way. But that's the point there: these are newly. Every new denomination, every new religion that is formed. A lot of people think that they've got it right but it's just new as you have defined it. In reality, if you go all the way back to Cain and Abel, every denomination, every religion can be broken down into either of Cain or of Abel.

I still remember and you know that we help support the work in Malawi and the first time I went over there I preached on the religion of Cain and the religion of Abel and the Lord so broke Brother James W. there because he was trying to move people from a works religion, trying to get them to ease into this new message that he had recently read about and heard about of Christ and I told him, "You can't. You can't mix." There is no common denominator between Cain and Abel, between works and grace, between man's righteousness and Christ's righteousness. Anything that Cain comes up with, even if you don't put the name Cain to it, it's still Cain. It's still worshiping a devil. It's still a different way of preparing the same old fruits and vegetables and fixing them up and trying to bring before God and God says it's a sacrifice to devils. Don't you show up in court with that and most certainly don't you show up before a holy God with that. Nothing but the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the shedding of blood, there is not remission of sin.

So as you come back here to Isaiah 43:10, he calls upon the defense, if you will, to bring forth their evidence and in reality show they don't have any. All they can do is appeal for more time, "Judge. It's coming." And the judge says, "No, it's not." Because it's all nothing but falsehood. But the judge now says, verse 10, he calls his own witnesses. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD." Now, who is he talking about here? He's talking about every blood bought sinner. He's talking about every sinner that he chose from eternity and for whom Christ would come and shed his blood and redeem.

And notice how it's summed up, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen." You might think that refers to his church, the sum of them being the servant, but they are his witnesses because of his servant whom he has chosen. Remember back here in Isaiah 42, this is all still the same section, in verse 1 where he said, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." What he's doing is calling his very Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be his chief witness and he will speak on behalf of every one of the other witnesses that are there present as to why they worship the one true God.

If I were to call you to stand right now one by one and witness to your God, who would it be? Well, I would hope that you would have but one thing to say, "I can't speak for myself. Everything I am is because of that chosen one, Christ, and his shed blood. I'd like to sit down and let him speak. I've got nothing more to say. If he doesn't represent me, then everything even I open my mouth to speak will condemn me." We're before a holy God. Do you see how foolish it is to have testimony meetings where people stand up and talk about things they've done and people applaud them, "Praise God!" You see the same sort of the thing in idolatrous worship around the world. Men flattering men, showing themselves to be more powerful than others and yet telling stories and some else will stand up and say, "I've got one better." And that's all it is, it's just a free-for-all of men. We're before a holy God. Let every mouth be silent. Let God be God and every man a liar.

That's what the Lord is doing here. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD." In other words, here is a whole room full of witnesses that the Lord could call on to testify but he says, "and my servant whom I have chosen." So who is going to speak? Well, it's that servant whom he has chosen. His elect. We're just there as evidence. We're exhibit A, B, C, D and E. Sinner 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 that's in the courtroom but his chosen servant is the one who speaks on his behalf.

He says, "that ye may know and believe me." You see, that's what faith does, it believes God. A lot of people put a little "on" there or "in" there, "believe in me, believe on me." No. Do you believe God? When people get talking about their works and what they've done, if you ask them, "Do you believe in God?" they're going to say, "Oh, yeah." But put it the way the Scripture puts it, "Do you believe God?" What does he say right here? A lot of people believe that this Bible is the word of God that don't believe God.

They don't believe his testimony because his testimony is that of which he has testified of his Son and the testimony is as he says here, they understand. That's not just a mental understanding but being taught of the Spirit. "Understand that I am he." There is that "I am." They have it here in italic but it's just because of the difficulty. It's one word, "I keep," in other words, "I am."

"Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." That's the kind of God that we worship. Every blood bought sinner is his witness but also all of the prophets that he raised up and sent forth are his witnesses. What we know and understand and

believe concerning the God of Scripture is based upon the prophets that he raised up to speak of him as the God and the Savior. Let us hear him.

But what are the proofs that he brings that he is God? You see, that's what we're reading here. This is like a courtroom. It has already been proven in verse 9 that the defense team doesn't have the evidence that they said they did and how are you going to call a false god? How are you going to call somebody that doesn't exist as a witness? You see, that's where God shut their mouths immediately. "Go ahead and bring them in. Let's let them speak. That idol that has a mouth, put it up here. Let's just all sit here and watch it. Let's hear what it has to say." That idol can't speak unless you speak for it.

Do you see why we say that this notion of free will is nothing but an idol? That's the kind of God that men believe in today can't speak for himself. It requires people to speak for them. How many times have you heard preachers say that God has no hands but your hands? He has no mouth but your mouth? If you don't say it, how is he going to get it done? He has no feet but your feet? If you don't carry it out there, how is it going to get done? That's an idol god. Or they say that God would really like to do certain things but he can't without your cooperation. That's an idol god.

It's like a friend of mine, I say a friend, an acquaintance of mine, one time his hut burned down. It was a village I would go to regularly to preach and when I got there the whole place was burned down. I said, "Well, what happened?" He said, "Well, I tried to save the stuff but ultimately," he said, "the thing that I needed to save the most were my idols." He said, "I lost everything else but I got my idols," and he went and showed them to me. It was sticks and stones, all tied, bandaged together. I thought, "So this is the god you worship that couldn't protect your house from burning down, number 1? And that god needed saving too from the very fire that was burning that you had to run back in there and grab it?" You see, that's an idol god. It needs help. God is not such a God. He doesn't need our help.

If you look over in Acts 17, when God says here, "Before me there was no God formed," there he's talking about capital G-o-d. He's not a God that has been formed and, "neither shall there be after me." Paul preached this in Acts 17. Look in Acts 17 when he was there in Athens and walking around and seeing all of those idols that were there. This is the way men are, aren't they? They have all their idols and just to make sure that we've covered them all, here's one to an unknown god in case there be any other. We don't want to offend any. Doesn't that sound like our modern day politics? We just want to make sure everything is politically correct. You can have your god and I can have mine. Let's don't fight.

He says here, Paul uses it in verse 23, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." That's an amazing, astounding thing because he was standing right across from

one of their biggest temples. You look about the millions of dollars that goes into budgets to building temples today only to find out God doesn't dwell there.

"Neither is worshipped with men's hands." Don't you bring in anything that you've brought with your own hands or wrought with your own hands or thought you had. "As though he needed any thing." How many times have you heard preachers say, "God needs you"? Remember, the one time that preacher there that everybody knows that needed another million dollars to keep the greater broadcast going ministry and so he holed himself up in his office and let everybody know he wasn't coming out until they came up with a million dollars. He told them, he said that's what God told him to do. "God needs you to give a million dollars." That would have been a good time to starve him out. But people gave. "Oh, we've got to help him. We've got to help God."

Here the God of Scripture, "Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." That's the God we worship and when he says, "I am the Lord God," and these are the proofs that he brings of himself here in Isaiah 43. The first proof is his infinite and infallible knowledge as to what he predicts. Do you see that? "I have declared and have saved and have shewed when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God."

How can God predict what will happen? Some people say, "Well, he looks down through time and eternity and sees what men will do and then works things accordingly." Well, that's not predicting anything then. No, he predicts all things because he has determined all things. He decrees all things and this is an area that even we who profess to know him often have our fight because we say we believe God, we say that he knows the end from the beginning and that he determines the end from the beginning and yet when things don't go our way, we fret. Not only fret, but we get angry and I'm the first to plead guilty here. We get upset and we get into the would-a, could-a, should-a. What if this had been different? What if that had been different? Wait a minute, who decreed this? Who purposed that? Who determined it? How many times you might not have a human explanation to what just happened but you can with certainly say there are no accidents with God. He did it for his glory and I'm but a witness but he's God.

Sometimes we get caught up trying to explain to people who ask us a reason like they did with David in Psalm 115, "Where now is your God?" What was David's simple answer even though the enemy was all over him, mocking him because of it? He said, "Our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." Can you believe a God like that? That's who he is. He's not only believable, he's to be believed and we are to rest because he is God. Which would you rather, God like that or the god the heathens, the nations that don't exist? An idol god?

Like that lady that told me, I had an office, "I don't believe God strikes people with illness, it's just a random event." I said, "Well, if that's it, we're all in trouble. If it's just random things out here flying around and there is no predictability?" You know, science is built on predictability. The reason why you can go in and teach certain things with

regard to science or astronomy or whatever is because there is order and it is the Lord that has put it there so don't you build on that and act as if this just happened. You're giving glory to another god that doesn't exist, you see.

He says there, again, as evidence not only his infinite and infallible knowledge but his infinite and irresistible power. He not only knows all things but he works all things to where he says none can deliver out of my hand. Do you see that in verse 13? "Yea, before the day was I am." Whatever day that is, whatever happened. You heard about the tsunami in Japan and now all of a sudden we find out there is another earthquake that hit northern Japan and people kind of scatter and run and think, "Where is this coming from?" God did it. God did it. There is no marvel.

"None can deliver out of my hand," if God has purposed to destroy. People do all they can to protect themselves but God is going to do what he's going to do and when it's done, that's the day that he speaks of there in verse 13, "Yea, before the day was I am he." All of the instruments of our death, if you will, are already laying on the table. It's just when the Lord is pleased to pick one up and use it. He'll execute his will and then it will be done and you'll not be able to stop it either way. I hope you're okay with that. You can't change it anyway. Who are you going to run to?

You stop and think of all the advancements in medicine that we have today, technology. How much of it is able to keep a person from dying? Even the very people that develop these things to improve quality of life, they can't extend life. Somewhere back there you read in the Scriptures it says that the Lord has given man 70 years and if by measure of strength 80. What are statistics showing us today? I mean, that was written thousands of years ago. With all the advances in technology, we barely have moved this number on the meter. It's still somewhere between 70 and 80 life expectancy. The Lord has set that in order as much as he set the sun rising and the moon orbits, all those things. Let's don't give glory to the science. The glory belongs unto the Lord. It's his knowledge, his power.

So then when we come to verses 14 through 21 here, as the Lord God, he calls his creatures to account. As the Lord God, his one witness is Christ. To him be all the glory. But thirdly, as the Lord God he alone is worthy of the honor and praise. When people say, "What's the right interpretation of Scripture?" This is it, that Christ gets all the glory. To believe God is to give him all the glory.

Where he says in verse 14, "Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships." He takes here these titles to himself and that's what I want you to see. This was written even before the Lord brought Israel back out of Babylon, even took them into Babylon. It's already declared as if it were done where he says, "For your sake I have sent to Babylon," when Isaiah wrote this, Israel had not even yet been taken into Babylon. The 70 years had not even started yet. But here's the God who determines the end from the beginning.

"I have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans." We're talking about the strongest army in the world. People are concerned now because they feel like our army is being whittled down to nothing. Well, it's been pretty strong for a while but who has made it so? It's been the Lord. With 100 years it may not even exist. People have this high and mighty idea that somehow it's going to stay high and mighty. No. Look how the Lord brought down the Chaldeans who were at one time the strongest nation in the world. Feared. For their ships. You can see that, "who cry is in their ships." They're boasting is what that means, "in their ships." In their strength. Be careful how you challenge the Lord. That's what one lawyer said about the Titanic before it sailed, "Not even God can sink this ship." Boy, was that a mistake.

He's the Lord. He declares himself to be so by his titles. He's the Savior. He's the Redeemer. Verse 14, he's the Holy One. Again, in verse 15, "I am the LORD, your Holy One, creator." If you underscore things in your Bible, look at all those attributes that are set forth there as to why he is to be believed and glorified and trusted. As the Lord, he is worthy of all the honor and praise. Not the creature but the Lord.

Fourthly, as the Lord God he does and ever will get the glory to himself, even over his enemies. Notice he says, "I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles." Sure, you can go back in history and read it, it was the Medes and the Persians, two nations that were brought together under one leader, Cyrus, that went in and dried up the river Euphrates. He actually used some engineering techniques to turn the river so that they could get under the walls. At the time, it was an ingenious move and people look at it that study war strategy and they say, "Wow, that was something for the day." Well, who gave them that knowledge? Who gave them that thought? Who gave them that timing? It was the Lord.

He said, "I," do you see that? "I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles." It's the Lord that did it and when he has purposed to save, he'll save. When he said up in verse 12, "I have declared and saved," there is nothing too strong, too mighty for God. You think about the salvation of sinners, what it took. Given a million years, we could not have come up with the right way. That's evident when you watch people today in their lostness, in their natural religion, all still thinking it's by works.

But here the holy God, the Creator, the Lord God as he says, "thy Lord God," he's left multitudes to their ignorance to perish but thy Lord God has devised the means by which he is just in justifying sinners, declaring them righteous. He spared not his Son but delivered him up for us all. So he gets all the glory and gives himself the glory even over his enemies. Babylon and the destruction of Babylon being a type really of false religion. It seems like right now false religion is prevailing. It's everywhere.

I remember when I first went to Ivory Coast and settled down in this little jungle town way out in the middle of nowhere, do you know what my motivation was for picking that spot? Most people think, "You were crazy." I mean, there is no electricity. It took two hours down a dirt road bumping all over to get back there. And the best house in the whole town was a shell that was partly built with an aluminum roof. It had no doors and

windows and you're going to move your family into this? It had no toilet. We had to borrow our neighbor's toilet which was a hole about 75' deep that you had to learn to kind of lean over and share it with 21 other people because that's how many he had in his house. One side was a shower and one side was the hole. You say, "Well, what were you thinking?" Well, I was thinking in my ignorance that here would be a place where religion hadn't laid any roots and lo and behold, the house that I rented was right across the street from this little group of people that showed up at 5 o'clock every morning, dinging a bell, carrying a Bible wrapped in a white cloth. I'm talking about a King James Bible in English. They didn't even speak English but they revered the Bible. It had become an idol and they called him Powaba, which was an English word for the powerful daddy, powerful father. And he dressed up in white and they all followed him into this little temple every morning and they pronounced the name of Jesus but not the Christ we know and I thought, "Of all the places to put me, right across the street from one of these guys."

You can't go anywhere in the world where religion hasn't been. Where Cain's seed is not already there. You see, there is always going to be that. It's in the heart of men. But it's the Lord to save and that's what caused me to wonder and to weight as the Lord a few years later showed me I was just as lost as that, that Powaba. Just as lost. I was just coming with a different form of righteousness. The Lord had to completely strip me to show me I was nothing. But he saved, he's the one who saves and he gives the glory unto himself. He's going to cause that Babylon to fall in the heart of his own people and then one day in the world when men will be called into account and they're going to present themselves before him with their works but it won't stand. Not compared to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, there is some more here that I would like to tell you about but we'll draw a line there and come back to it but I pray that the Lord would truly give us hearts by his Spirit to worship him alone and his Son alone.