

The Lord Did It

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Bible Text: Isaiah 44

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Please turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 44. Now, if you were astute, you'd notice that last week this was supposed to be my text, Isaiah 44. I put it in the bulletin that way, verses 9-28, but if you'll just take a look at your Bibles how many verses does Isaiah 43 have? 28. If you look at the content of Isaiah 43 and Isaiah 44, very similar. So you can appreciate my consternation when I got up here last week and read Isaiah 43 to you and I'm looking at my notes, I'm reading Isaiah 43 and I'm thinking, "Something's not right. We've already read this." But the content was so similar that I thought, "Okay, you know, been away down in Florida. Got a little break. A little tired. Maybe it was just my mind." The points fit, the passage, but instead of 44 we were going down through 43. I don't know how many of you even noticed but it's one of those things about preaching. I have my notes up here to direct me but not to dictate and the only thing I can say is the Lord purposed it.

So today we're going to read Isaiah 44 and, again, it shows us that this word is rich and deep so even though there are similarities, great similarities between Isaiah 43 and 44, some might say it was repetitive, what are you going to preach, we know that nothing in Scripture is repetitive. That it's there for a purpose and if the Lord declared it twice one after another, certainly it's for our hearing. So let's read Isaiah 44.

1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: 2 Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4 And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. 5 One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. 6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. 7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid:

have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

9 They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? 11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. 12 The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. 13 The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. 14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. 15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

21 Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. 23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it.

That is the title of this message, the Lord God did it.

23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hat done it, shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in

Israel. 24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; 25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars [another word for idols], and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; 26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: 27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: 28 That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

So let's think about what's declared here as verse 23, something to hang all of this content on that I read and that is: that the Lord hath done it. Perhaps you've seen these signs out in front of religious buildings where once they get it built and it looks ornate and fresh and new and bright and parking lot full, I've seen signs out front that said, "God did it." Now, of course, for them I believe it's a matter of pride to try to explain why so much money was taken up and given to a cause that is nothing more than to be a meeting place for people to carry out their devices and, sadly, their idolatry. I find that many of these sorts of buildings that are dedicated to religious purposes you find in some poor areas, not only of a city but I've found it to be in the world. Different places where I've traveled in some remote areas that's just stark poverty and you pull into a village and there right in the center of that village everybody else living in a little old mud hut with thatched roofs but there is this huge monument to men's stupidity, the fact that they have gathered up and beaten down the poor even to their last penny to build these things and somehow people are made to believe that God's in that. If you just give, even if you're starving and can't afford another meal, you give and God will bless you.

That's why people do it and there are a myriad of preachers that are willing to lead the way and not only take from the people but take, not from themselves, but for themselves. There is a place that I drive through many times going to my house that's in a poor section of town but over the years that they have taken an old dilapidated building and they've fixed up the building. I can see progress every time and when you look at everything around it, it's still a shambles. It's poverty and yet people gather there on days dictated by their religious leaders to meet and to continue to give. And the thing that I've always noticed is while others come in perhaps in lesser vehicles and lesser means, they'll even send out vans to pick people up that can't afford transportation, the preacher happens to have a Jaguar and his wife happens to have the latest Escalade and I know that because I've driven by as they've been pulling out. They look that model as a pastor and wife team and that's how they are promoted around this city. You can see their faces on a billboard.

That's how people lead other people in their ignorance and such is the state of sinners just as we read here in Isaiah 44. You say, "Why does somebody cut down a tree and take part of it to warm themselves and to cook their meal and roast their meat and yet with the

rest of it they make an idol," even as it says there in verse 13, "after the figure of a man?" It's idolatry. Why do people invest so much money into religion? Because it's after the figure of a man. They are made to believe in their ignorance and in their blindness that by their giving, by their doing, that somehow God is going to prosper them and that's the religion of our day. That's the Christendom of our day: health, wealth and prosperity. I've seen preachers get wild and stomp and go back and forth and get down in the audience and they're pretty much saying, "If you were really as close to God as I am, you could have what I have." They put it over on the people and people blindly follow them.

The point that I want us to see here is that when I tell you the Lord God hath done it as it is in verse 23 here, we're not talking about just temporal things. It is true, any blessing that we have and enjoy, the fact that I can drive up here in a very comfortable car and wear a suit and tie, I can say the Lord did it. Nothing I have came from these hands. Nothing that I do. Nothing that I think. Everything that I apply to what the Lord puts in my hands is because of what he has given me and you have to say the same. There are none of us sitting here that could ever attribute any glory to the works of our hands but that's not the thing that is lasting. Everything in this life, we're going to leave here. Naked we came into the world and that's just the way we're going to go out.

The amazing thing about men's blindness in verse 14 of Isaiah 44, you know, men lay claim to property. You talk about some of these trees here. I'm not a carpenter, I don't work with wood, but I would venture to believe that some who do would covet these types of trees: the cypress, the cedars, the oak, the ash tree. It's describing what men go out and take freely from what the Lord gives them. They lay claim to a piece of forest that allows them a pretty good livelihood. They cut down these trees and they do business with them and how much does the Lord require of them? They don't pay a dime. How much did you pay? We pay for lights for our house but we don't pay for the sunshine and yet people take that sunshine in order to produce other things and charge people. They make a living off of it. The point here is that their depravity is seen in that even in that they don't give the glory to God. They give the glory to the power of their own hand and they fashion it so that in the end it bears their name. You think about how many inventions there are. Go out there and look at the stars of the heavens, discoveries that have been made in scientists' names or inventors' names have been put to it. People are proud of that, but where did they get the wisdom even to pursue such things or delve into them if not from the Lord?

So when I tell you God did it, I believe there are several things in this particular portion that we've looked at that stand in contrast to even the best that man can think of or consider and that's where I want our minds and our hearts to be turned today. Going back to the beginning of this chapter in Isaiah 44, I put here in my notes: God did it, the Lord God did it with regard to every spiritual blessing. You stop and think about the spiritual blessings that we as the Lord's people enjoy. It begins with election in verse 1. Now, this is a truth that the religious world will chafe against and, again, it's because they want to give glory to man. Just like idolaters, they fashion in their mind how they perceive God and they perceive God, and mark my words if this isn't true, listen to what's being preached: they perceive God pretty much as passive, waiting for you to do something.

That's how preachers preach up their god, little g-o-d. It's not the God of Scripture. They say, "God is waiting to bless you if you'll just take the first step. You take the first step and then God will do the rest," so it's like getting an engine started: you've got to push it a little bit and then, okay, there is going to be momentum. That's not the God of Scripture. When we speak of the Lord doing it, we give glory and praise and honor to him to the fact and truth that if I'm the Lord's, he chose me. He chose me.

Notice so that men would know that there's nothing in them, he says, "Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant and Israel whom I have chosen." Yes, he was blessed to be called Israel, prince with God, but Jacob, a reminder of what we are by nature. He was nothing but a transplanter, a deceiver, and so are we by nature. So if I know anything of the Lord, if it could be said that I am his, I know it's not I that did choose him but he that did choose me. "Jacob have I loved," is what the Scriptures say. "Esau have I hated."

That's a spiritual blessing but we confess that the Lord God did it. There are people out there building church buildings, so-called and gathering people for worship hanging the sign out there, "God did it," but if I were to go in there and preach just this very point right here that I've told you, they'd run you out. "Oh no you don't." On the one hand they say, "We've got to give God the glory," but on the other hand, let's don't leave man out. I've heard preachers say, "We've got to keep the Scriptures balanced here." No, we just have to declare what it says and it says there, "whom I have chosen." Who is speaking but the Lord God? You'll not be a child of God unless the Lord has chosen you to be and it's his right to do as he will.

But, secondly, the blessing we see there in verse 2 is the same thing, "I have formed thee." Again, "Fear not, O Jacob, my servant." That's a reminder of who we are. We are the Lord's to do with what he will and so we bow. We honor him. The spiritual blessing of the water of life in verse 3, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." The Samaritan woman would never have found Christ on her own. When you read there in John 4 Christ said, "It must needs be that I go through Samaria." The disciples couldn't understand that because Jews and Samaritans didn't get along. Even if they had to leave the north part of the country and go to the south, they went across around Samaria, that's how much they hated them. And when the Lord told the disciples, "I must needs go through Samaria," they were shocked.

Look at it in John 4 in your Bibles. It wasn't that there wasn't another way to get to the south for from the south to the north here was leaving Judea in verse 3, which would have been the south, and departing again into Galilee. But it says, verse 4, "he must needs go through Samaria." You say, "Why did he need to be there?" Well, look at verse 7, "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." Why did she go to the well? Well, she was thirsty and the Lord said to her, "Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." In reality, as a sinner, Christ did not even have to have any dealings with them. There were many other Samaritans that he passed by. There were many other Jews that he passed by.

"Jesus answered and said unto her," here it is, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." You see, that's just our nature. We don't even know to ask, that's how dead we are. When preachers say, "Well, just ask." We don't know to ask. We're not even conscious of our own thirst.

That's why back here in Isaiah 44:3, the Lord said, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." In this case, who is active and who is passive? The sinner is nothing more than the dry ground. The sinner is nothing more than that dry and thirsty land if it were not for the Lord purposing to give his spirit and cause that one to truly thirst.

There was a day when I didn't thirst. I didn't know I was thirsty. I didn't know I needed the water of life. I thought I already had it until the Lord caused me to see that I was nothing more than this dry land, parched. And when he was pleased to give his Spirit to open my heart and eyes to see Christ and behold him, I renounced all that religion. All of that teaching that somehow tried to balance Scripture, "This is what God does. This is what you do." And brought me low to realize that the Lord himself did it.

And what's the result? You see in Isaiah 44:4, "they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." Any that are the Lord's, it's because the Lord has caused them to spring up in an otherwise dry and thirsty land. There are many he leaves to themselves. You can drive across the desert in certain parts of this country in Africa and other places, no matter how much rain falls it's still a desert. Nothing flourishes. The Lord has purposed that it be desert. You go a few miles down the road and all of a sudden it's lush. I remember that flying over the island where Haiti and Dominican Republic share the same island. You can see a clear line of demarcation. Where Dominican Republic is, it is lush green and then all of a sudden you hit this mountainous area and everything looks brown from there all the way to the sea. You're sitting there thinking both parts are surrounded by water and yet the Lord has purposed one part to be lush green and the other part to be stark, brown, dry.

That's his to do as he will. It's his earth, you see, and the same is true spiritually. Why would we presume that we...you know, most people presume just by default that they're the Lord's. That's just the way men think but I'll tell you this: when it says "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated," it ought not to surprise us to read "Esau have I hated." The amazing grace is that he would love a Jacob. Is that how you see it? That's the way it is. That's the way it is.

That's what the Lord is reminding them of here. Surrounded by this idolatry, he's reminding them of whose they are and why they are whose they are. It's the Lord God that has done this and he says in verse 5, "One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Who is he talking about there? In

verse 1 he says, "O Jacob," but this Jacob of which he speaks is not just made up of natural Jews. He's speaking here of these nations, Gentiles, that the Jews hated as much as they hated the Samaritan woman and that yet the Lord is saying, "Even as I have chosen Jacob, that Jacob has many members who will subscribe to his name that aren't necessarily born of that lineage." In other words, natural seed. We're talking here about a spiritual seed. As I read that, I have to say that's the only way I can be named among the Lord's people is that he purposed that I be the Lord's. He purposed that I would call myself by the name of Jacob. You stop and think about the name Jacob. Who wants to identify with a Jacob? That takes a heart which the Lord himself would humble to be able to say, "I can identify with Jacob." Can you? Only the grace of God can cause you to do so.

It says here, "and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel." At the time that this was written, Israel was completely scattered. It wasn't a country or a name to be identified with. You know, Babylon had come in and already taken out the remaining tribes. Assyria, several centuries before, had come down and taken away, destroyed ten of the tribes. Israel was scattered. That wasn't the nation to be identified with and yet the Lord says when his work was done, there would be those that would be brought out from all these nations and identify with a true Israel which is none other than that people that the Lord Jesus Christ came to redeem and to save and that's what verse 6 says, "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."

It's not in the masses. There are a lot of people today that name the name of Christ who aren't his. I notice here in verse 5, one here, one there. One shall say I am the Lord's. Don't look for his people among the masses. One and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob. And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord and surname himself by the name of Israel. That's just how the Lord does his work. He calls them one at a time. Christ said, "I didn't come to bring peace but a sword in a family." Don't marvel that in your family there is a division. If the Lord has taught you but he's passed by the rest of your family, praise his name he was pleased to reveal himself in you. The Lord did it. The Lord did it.

But verses 6 through 17, which is a greater part of this chapter, I have noted here: the Lord God did it with regard to the sovereign outworking of his will and providence. This is another point that people contest. They won't have God to be God and so they've got the world divided. They've got God on one end of the rope pulling this way; they've got Satan on the other end of the rope pulling that way; and they're telling people, "What we have to do is get on God's side." Move over here and help God in this tug-of-war. How do they tell them to do that? Well, through prayer, giving, all these things. That's not the God of Scripture that requires men's help in order to rule this world.

He is God and he says there is none beside him. Do you see that at the end of verse 6? What kind of God is he? When we say the Lord God did it, there is nothing in this world that moves or breathes or exists but what it has its existence in God and him

accomplishing his purpose. Good, bad or ugly, God did it. God did it whether men acknowledge it or not. That's what he says there in verse 7, "And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it?" That's an interesting term. Stand up and predict what's going to happen tomorrow in the world. I'm talking about everything. That's the calling and declaring it and then set it in order. Go ahead and do it. Can you do it?

We don't even have control of our personal calendars. I've got one that sits on my desk and I let Carol, my administrator, she has full access to it. She'll come and she'll pencil in something and I'll think that's the way it is and I'll come back and sit down and it's been changed. That's the way our day goes. None of us has control. You might get up in the morning and set your day in order and think, "This is what I'm going to get done," and then comes the first phone call. Okay, let's move A to C and C up to A. We have no control but the Lord does and he says to these idols, he says this to finite man, "Go ahead and predict what's going to take place." None of us knows.

None of us knows but the Lord does and that's his point there, "the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them." What he's leading up to in this whole chapter when you think about Israel being away in captivity and for 70 years under the thumb of Nebuchadnezzar and the King of Babylon, Israel completely laid waste, the temple destroyed. As far as Israel was concerned, there was no hope and yet the Lord had already purposed in his time that he would raise up a king that is described there in verse 28, Cyrus. He was a pagan king, an idolater, and yet I read something about him: he was quite liberal. He respected the customs and religions of the lands that he conquered and so his thought when he took over was, "What are these people doing way away from their land?" He made a decree, "Send them back. Let them rebuild the temple." Cyrus acted according to his nature that he had; people say that was his character to do so, but in reality he wasn't doing anything more or less than what God himself had determined in his time.

And nobody saw Cyrus coming. It's an interesting history. When you think about the power that Babylon had and this war and conflict has been going on for years. What is known as Babylon, in fact in this day is modern day Iraq. Cyrus came from the land that we would know today as Iran. That conflict has been going on for years but I'm going to tell you what: nothing happens but what the Lord determines. Everything is exactly the way it's supposed to be right now because the Lord has declared the end from the beginning. People try to figure it out in their minds, "We ought to be there. We ought not to be there." The fact is, we're there and we wouldn't be there if the Lord hadn't purposed it and when it's his time, we'll be out one way or another.

The Lord did it and I'm telling you, if you want to start a fight among religious people at the office or work or anywhere else, just keep repeating that, "The Lord did it." Whenever there is a calamity, "The Lord did it." Last night a stage fell and killed five people, there are some others, people gathered at a state fair to hear a concert. They didn't go there thinking they were going to die but if someone asked me, "Well, how does this happen?" The Lord did it. You'll get some discussions going but the Lord did it. I remember preachers on the radio trying to explain what happened in New Orleans and

you've got these people that came in and said, "Well, we can't really say God did this because God is too kind. God is too loving." Scripture says the Lord did it.

He has his way in the wind and the storm and Cyrus used some innovation to take over Babylon when you see there in verse 27, "That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers." It's the Lord that said, "Be dry." What Cyrus did was performed an engineering feat. He diverted the Euphrates because Babylon had these little tunnels underneath the wall where water went through to supply the city and he figured out a way to divert that great river and then go in underneath the wall on dry land and conquer Babylon while they were partying. Everybody looks at that and says, "My, he was wise." No, the Lord did it. He had no wisdom in and of himself to even think or do anything like that. The Lord did it.

What I read here in verses 6 through 8 of Isaiah 44 is that all things are of him, but the point is that men foolishly attribute their success to the works of their own hands and that's really what verses 9 through 17 are about. Taking a piece of wood and forming it, forming a god or a molten and graven image, I don't care whether it's a smith as described in verse 12 or a carpenter, men are idolaters by nature. But that's the kind of nature we have unless God is pleased to teach us and to show us the glory of his power and majesty and that of his Son. That's what we are by nature, we'll foolishly attribute our success to our degree. "Went to school, got a degree and therefore I'm a little better than the next guy." No, the Lord did it. The Lord did it. Today people attribute it to luck, "Got lucky." What's that? There is nothing that takes place by chance. The Scriptures say the die is cast and the result thereof is of the Lord. That's his doing.

Over here in James 4 and I know I've got to stop. We'll come back to this but James 4, here's a reminder that blessed be the name of the Lord that it is so. In James 4, beginning with verse 13, "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." How many of you and myself included, have already made plans for tomorrow, even for this afternoon? "For what is your life? It is even a vapour." That's a pretty strong description. The best that man is is but a vapor. "That appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your," what? "Boastings." Anything less than giving God all the glory whether it's in our salvation or whether it's in our everyday walk, our lives, temporal or spiritual. Giving God anything less than all the glory is nothing but boasting. And he says, "all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

We say the Lord did it. In verse 18 all the way down to verse 20 and I want to come back to this because there's a lot more here, but the sum of it is this: that the Lord does it all with regard to judgment, with regard to condemnation, even the judicial blindness of sinners. You see in verse 18, "They have not known nor understood," and then you see the very next part says, "for he hath shut their eyes." Scripture says God hardened Pharaoh's heart to accomplish his purpose. Can he do that? He is God. He is God. Let's give him all the praise and the glory. If we know anything of him and his grace, it's

because he did it. He purposed it. He chose whom he'll save. He redeemed them, that word is throughout this portion of Scripture, "Jacob whom I have redeemed." He didn't just decree it but he sent his Son to shed his blood that he might be the just God and Savior. The Lord did it.