

Title: There's no god like our God. Pt.2
Text: Isaiah 43.1 – 44.20
Theme: The undisputed uniqueness of God
Series: Isaiah #37
Prop: Since there is no God, but God it is hopeless to hope in anyone else.

In 1995, Barak Obama released his memoir, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. Had he known then that he would one day be the President; he possibly would have given more attention to the facts as he presented them. As you can imagine, his memoir has come under scrutiny for its propensity for stretching the truth and in some cases, simply making things up. But, wait a minute. This is 2012. Does it really matter if a person tells the truth?

Gerald Early, a noted professor of English literature at Washington University in St. Louis, doesn't think so. He said, "*It really doesn't matter if he made up stuff, I mean, after all, it's like you going to a psychiatrist and you make up stuff, and the psychiatrist can still psychoanalyze you because they're your lies.... Autobiographies are not really good sources if you're looking for absolute complete factual accounts of someone's life. Autobiographies serve another kind of purpose for the person writing the book. I don't think it much matters whether Barack Obama has told the absolute truth in Dreams From My Father. What's important is how he wanted to construct his life.*"

Ok, what if your doctor practiced like that? That means that it really does not matter if he tells you the truth about your medical condition, because after all, your doctor is simply trying to construct his life. What if your accountant worked with that belief? That means that if she lies to you about your tax liability and penalties, that you should take it all in stride, since she is simply attempting to construct her life. After all, her lies will help you understand her. Now, isn't that comforting? So, what is it that we are to understand? How do the lies help us? They help us see that she is a liar! Sadly, we are not shocked to discover that a politician has released a book characterized by discrepancies. What is so pathetic are the lame attempts to justify it. Beloved, this issue is not unique to the political sphere. This is a serious issue in theological and religious circles. Yesterday, the leadership of another protestant denomination voted "to prohibit discrimination on gender identity or expression in the lay and ordained ministry discernment process and in the overall life, worship and governance of the ___ church. Validating those who are "transgender" and further erasing any gender distinction. I can see how an amoral society can do that. But how does a church that supposedly respects the Bible do that? The argument goes like this: It really doesn't matter if the Bible is factually true, in fact it really isn't. What matters is that it is a nice story that gives us principles for life. That's it. It's true in the sense that it is true for us (at least the parts that we like). The Bible is not primarily what God thinks about man, but is an ancient collection of writings that tell us what some people have thought about God. It's historically interesting, but not to be taken too seriously.

Now, hold the phone. First of all, God goes on the record and not only gives factual information that stands up under scrutiny, but he tells us factual details before they

happen. God reveals the facts because truth matters. Truth is the basis for trust and God not only commands us to trust him, but he gives us compelling reason why we must. Secondly, what collection of legends and folk tales describes the entire human race as hopeless sinners who have thumbed their nose at their infinitely righteous Creator (the Triune God), and who would be eternally damned by his just judgment, expect that this God is so merciful that he humbled himself, became one of us in order to live a perfectly righteous life in our place so that he could be the complete sacrifice and pay for our sins by his substitutionary death on the cross? Who could conceive of such God? We cannot! The message of this Bible is evidence that this Bible originated from outside of us. As this text demonstrates, we see this enormous contrast between the gods and idols that the human race conjures up, and the true God. What do you see about the idols of this world? Every idol has its laws. Every god has its expectations. If you do not measure up, there is hell to pay. The religions of this world are essentially based upon fear. If you don't satisfy the gods, then you will suffer. That is patently obvious with the superstitious beliefs of third world countries. Fear is what drives parents to drown their babies in the Ganges River, and give all of their earthly possessions to the Haitian witch doctor. But, it is also patently obvious in the cult of fashion and dress. If you do not satisfy the fashion gods, then you will suffer rejection and suffer mocking. As parents, we fear that our children may suffer taunting. Our kids fear rejection, so we offer ourselves at the temples of style and trends. Every religion, except one, even materialism and education is built on fear. It is our way of trying to make sense and control our world. The result? People like to say, it really does not matter what you believe, or if it is really true, as long as it works for you. Oh yea? This is Detroit. Let's test drive this. Here is a five-year-old boy whose daddy promised to come home and play ball with him. The boy waits all evening in the front yard, but daddy doesn't come home. Daddy is out with his friends. The boy is distraught. His mom tells him that his dad had to work late and that he will play with him tomorrow. She doesn't know that to be true, but it works to calm the boy down and he finally goes to bed. It doesn't matter that she lied, right? It worked for her and it worked for him, until tomorrow. Tell that boy enough lies like that and add ten years to his life and what do you have?

If it is true, that there is no absolute truth (a contradiction) then we would have nothing to trust and would just have the illusion of trust. There would be no wall of definition, no security of truth, no structure for meaning, and no purpose or reason for life. Life would be emptied of all meaning. Of course, if life is truly void of meaning, then meaning would not even be a category that we would even consider. Hypothetically, if there is no truth outside of us, then we would be left to trust only in ourselves; and what is the obvious problem with that? We lie. We stretch the truth, cover up reality and pretend that we are fine, even when we aren't. We need someone who will tell us the truth, even if we do not want to hear it. God does. And, no one tells you the truth, like God. The truth is, you have problems you cannot solve. You need to be rescued and you cannot save yourself. God can and does. All of the gods of this world have laws and hell to pay when you don't measure up. But, here is what is so amazing about the true God. His law is not only infinitely more righteous and holy than all others, and therefore impossible for us to measure up. Therefore, we are deserving of the worst hell that you can imagine, but this jaw-dropping, faith-stretching, joy-inducing God, satisfied his own justice by providing

Christ as our substitute. The true God is also merciful. He is so merciful that He saves. He rescues. He forgives. He keeps and won't let go. He is faithful to his promises, even when the ones to whom he has made the promises are not. There's no god like our God.

Read Text:

Since Adam brought sin into the world by his act of rebellion, the Bible has repeatedly addressed this urgent and eternal issue of salvation. Israel's epic deliverance from Egypt; Judah's inexplicable return from Babylon, and all the smaller stories in between, like Joseph's rescue from prison and his rescue of his family from famine, and David's deliverance from Goliath are all designed to point to one thing. God is so merciful that he has provided a way for people to be rescued from sin. In every case, the person who needs to be rescued is completely at the mercy of God because the one who needs to be rescued cannot affect the rescue. That means that if you are going to be rescued from your sin, you have to understand that you cannot do it. You have to understand that it is God alone who can rescue you. In fact, you must trust God to do it. But, in order to trust God to save you, you have to see and understand that he is worthy of your trust. You have to see that he, in fact is believable. So, over and over God demonstrates why he is worthy of your full and final faith. In every major rescue, God went on record before hand and said that he was going to do it. He plans all of these rescues, so that you will see that our God saves, and so that you will believe that He can save you.

In these chapters, the prophet Isaiah is anticipating the day when Judah is taken captive by the Babylonians and desperately needs to turn back to God. God is going on record ahead of time saying that not only is the judgment coming, but so is my deliverance! In essence God is saying (42.18-25), that in spite of the fact that you did not recognize my hand in your life and you did not trust me, and are experiencing the consequences of that, I am going to rescue you anyway. I am telling you this ahead of time, so that you will see that there is no God who cares for you like I do. There is no God who is able to ordain, determine, and control all things like I do. There is no God who can compare to me at all. There is no God who can match my glory and my grace. My rescue is not based upon your goodness, but based upon my promise. This is SO very important to grasp. God's deliverance is not based upon your repentance. Your repentance is based upon God's determination to deliver you. God will not deliver you apart from your repentance and trust in him, but it is God's determination to deliver you that provides you with the grace to repent and believe in him. There's no god like our God...

4. ...who cares for you. (1-15)

A. **The evidence** (1-7)

Verses 1-7 are a chiasm. Look at verses 1 and 7. They both speak of God as creator. Verse 2 corresponds with verses 5-6. This means that the heart of this section is verses 3 and 4. Here God is explaining how much he values his people and that there is no ransom that is too high, that he is unwilling to pay for them. All of this being incontrovertible

evidence that God not only cares for you, but (greater context) there is NO God who cares for you, like God cares for you.

1. He is your maker. (personal attention) (1a)
2. He is your redeemer. (1b)
3. He is your protector. (2)
4. He is your savior. (3)
5. He is your rescue. (driven by love) (4)
6. He ordains and determines your deliverance. (5-7)

The people of God are those who have been created, formed, made, and called by God's name all for the purpose of putting his glory on display. There is no way that God can ever abandon his own people. History has demonstrated that the gods of this world were nothing more than frauds. What other people (nation) has endured like Israel?

B. The challenge (8-13)

Here God is calling out the other so-called gods. The language is of a trial and the witnesses are the people of Judah. He is challenging them along with anyone to produce evidence that would demonstrate that there is a god that is superior to him, or that there is evidence that would demonstrate that he is not God.

1. What other god can do this? (8-9)

What other god has gone on record and has given explicit detail of what is going to happen? Show me a god who is able to orchestrate all future events so that they fulfill the details of his predictions. Over and over, the answer to the challenge is clear: there is no god like our God, because there is no other god.

2. What other god is there? (10)

Name a god who came before me. The point is, there is none. The reason for that is that all gods are the product of man's sinful imagination. God then declares that there will be no god after him either. Here is another example of God stating his self-existence. He has no origin. He is not the result of myth. He stands outside of time. He is absolutely unique. But, notice how verse 10 begins. "You are my witnesses" God says. He is calling out his people who have seen the evidences of his power and he is challenging them. You cannot sit on the sidelines any longer. You cannot pretend to have your own little religion where you piece together a bit of this religion and bit of that. You are all in or nothing! What is it going to be? Who are you going to trust? Who are you going follow?

3. What other god can save? (11-13)

In these three verses, there are a series of short pronouncements that God makes concerning himself. God is saying that He is and there is no other. I alone AM GOD and I alone am SAVIOR.

Look at his record. How do you explain Abraham? How do you explain the exodus from Egypt 400 years later, like God said? How do you explain David, Jerusalem and David's dynasty? How do you explain Israel? How do you explain the captivity and the return, 70 years later, like God said? How do you explain the dispersion of 70 AD and the reforming of Israel as a nation 1900 years later? But, beyond all of that, how do you explain Jesus? How do you explain the cross?

C. The conclusion (14-15) (transition)

God consistently demonstrates that he is more than creator (1, 15), King (15) and Holy One (3, 14). He is Savior (3, 11), and Redeemer (1, 14). His power is unequalled; therefore there is nothing that can stop his power to save. When God determines to save someone, he will save them. He will accomplish what he planned. I will accomplish what I promised. Even your unfaithfulness will not thwart my faithfulness. There's no god like our God...

5. ...**who controls all things**. (43.16 – 44.5)

A. Creation (43.16 – 17)

These two verses take us back to the Red Sea where God demonstrated his authority over all of creation. Not only did the sea do his bidding, but Pharaoh's army did exactly what God told Moses was going to happen. Isaiah is reminding us that God is not only in charge of all aspects of creation but he is in charge of orchestrating all events.

B. Events (past, present and future) (43.18 – 21)

Verse 18 sounds a bit odd all by itself, but the point is clear. God is not like an idol that is locked into a predictable cycle. God delivered his people in the past through the sea. God is going to deliver his people this time by doing something new. God is going to make a way in the wilderness and even a river in the desert if he has to. There is nothing that can prevent God from doing what God promised and if God made rivers in the desert then even the wild beasts would recognize that it was God who had done these things. The point is obvious. Only God can do these things. Even wild beasts have enough sense to recognize the hand of God, how much more should people who have seen God move in history and predict it, even before it happened.

C. Salvation (43.22 – 44.5)

Verses 22-28 are responding to the accusation that God is not fair, or that he is too harsh, or that his judgment is too heavy. Instead of looking at their continual rebellion, the people are blaming God for their misery. God is saying, hold the phone! I did not choose you, plan your rescue, and cause your salvation because you asked me to (22-24). The Jews were "doing the law" in order to keep God off of their backs. It had degenerated into weariness. There was no faith or love. They simply went through the motions. Their sacrifices did not obligate God to them. He is saying that, I saved you because I

determined to (25). It is God's determination to save that brings about salvation. God not only plans salvation, God makes it happen. God even applies salvation by moving upon us in such a way that he gives us the faith to believe in him. God's mercy is incredible! And, not only that, but God promises that he is going to send his Spirit in such a way that the salvation that he predicts is secured by his Spirit in the very hearts of his people (44.1-5) so that their ultimate rescue is guaranteed. God is so amazing that he does not leave any aspect of our salvation to chance. Therefore, there's no god like our God...

6. ...**who has no equal**. (44.6-20)

This is the crux of this entire section. Judah trusted in other gods to rescue her from the other nations, and it did not work. God predicted their defeat and it happened. God then predicted their deliverance. And his point is the same gods who could not protect you, cannot stop me from keeping my word and delivering you.

A. **The challenge** (6-8)

God throws down the gauntlet. He says to all of the other gods and to all idolaters. "Show up or shut up!" He then shows the evidence as to why all of the gods of this world are imposters. Look at the evidence.

B. **The evidence** (9-20)

1. Where did your god come from? (12)

It comes from a "strong man" who gets hungry and weak if he doesn't get food and water.

2. What does your god look like? (13)

It looks like the guy who made it

3. What is your god made of? (14-17)

It is made of the same wood that is so dispensable and unnecessary that it is used for fuel for a fire. Why is it okay to burn down one part of the tree and so offensive when you burn the other part? So what if you gave it eyes and ears and a mouth!

4. What can your god do? (18-20)

Nothing. He cannot think. He cannot discern. He cannot see, just like his maker and followers. The conclusion is clear. Idolaters are hopelessly confused and deluded. There has to be a better way – and there is!

You have before you a choice. Are you going to trust in yourself and the gods of this world (which are no gods at all) or are you going to trust God? They both have their laws.

But here is the difference, and there is an eternity's worth of difference between them. Fear is the reason why you try to keep the laws of false religion, of which atheism is a part. But, "fear not" (faith) is the promise and the hope for those who are embraced by God. There is no god like our God. No God is true. And the true God is merciful.

Conclusion – 44.21-22