



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The LORD Almighty--His Glory (Isaiah 43:1-13)

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, April 17, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, April 17, 8:30 PM in Room #301**
(Speaker Pro-Tem's office)

Why does God do anything?

Isaiah 48:9-11 For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.

Isaiah 44:23 Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the LORD has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.

Ezekiel 36:22-23 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight."

John 14:13 Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Ephesians 1:5-6 ...he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

These passages are just a sampling of the many Scripture verses that explain God's purposes for His actions. The answer to the opening question is that God does all things for His glory or the praise of His name. This truth is evident in today's study passage as God describes the deeds that He has done and will do.

I. GOD'S WORK

Before examining the glorious deeds of Yahweh, look at the context. In chapter 42, Isaiah is continuing his presentation of God's work of the restoration of His people that he started in chapter 40. In 42:1-6, God, through Isaiah, declares the coming of His Servant—Jesus Christ, the Messiah. And in 42:8, the theme of God's glory begins to appear.

WHY DOES GOD STILL SHOW LOVE TOWARD REBELLIOUS, HATEFUL, SIN-FILLED, OBSTINATE PEOPLE LIKE ME AND YOU?

Isaiah encourages the people to lift up the praise of God, but they have given God's glory to something else (42:17) and they will be humiliated (v17), plundered (v22), and disciplined (v25).

In spite of all this, God will still do a great work. In 43:1, God says, "But now..." This is a great conjunction. In spite of the grievous things the people have done in the past, God says, "But now... something different is coming." He is saying, "You have rejected Me. You gave what credit and praise that I alone deserve and have given it to lifeless objects. I have justifiably punished and disciplined you for your deeds and you still are clueless about what you have done—but in spite of all that, look and see what I will do.

Isaiah 43:1-7 But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, ROOM #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4THFLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!² "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you."³ "For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place."⁴ "Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life."⁵ "Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west."⁶ "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth,"⁷ Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

What has He done?

HE HAS REDEEMED (43:1B)

Implied in verse one is the idea that God's people are in bondage and there is no way for them to free themselves. And the price for their freedom is paid by God Himself.

There are two aspects of this redemption to which Isaiah is referring. First there is the release from the physical captivity that the nation of Israel finds itself in due to God turning them over their enemies because of their sin (42:24-25).

Secondly, there is also a distant future work being described—the redemption paid by the blood of God's own Son. The title and work of a Redeemer is found 13 times in Isaiah 40-66. Not only was Isaiah referring to the near future restoration of Israel from Babylonian captivity, but also to a farther future redemption through Christ. In regards to the command "Do not fear", Ernest J. Young writes,

Only if the heart of this word is found in the blood of Jesus Christ can there be any meaning to the command *fear not*. If the reference be only to the exodus from Egypt or only to the deliverance from exile, there is no ground for the command not to fear... The heart of the word, however, is in the cross of Christ...¹

HE HAS CALLED (43:1C)

In Isaiah 48:12, God said, "Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called..." Of all the nations on the earth at that time, it was Israel that God called to carry out His decreed plan. It was not due to their size for they were small; it was not due to their greatness and wealth, for they were slaves and had to be delivered; it was not due to their goodness, Isaiah has already noted their sinful tendencies. Rather it was because, in His eyes, God says they "were precious" that He honored and loved them (43:4) and called them (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). This is similar to Paul's teaching to the church at Corinth that not many of them were "wise, mighty, or noble." But God called them to shame the "wise, mighty and noble" things of the world and to show His own greatness (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

Because He has redeemed and called, God says to them, "You are mine." This bring to mind Jesus' words that He is the Good Shepherd and He knows His sheep (John 10:11-16). The Apostle Peter also writes, *...for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy* (1 Peter 2:10).

HE WILL GUIDE AND PROTECT (43:2)

Even though God redeems and calls, not all trials are removed. There are still temptations and problems to be experienced, but the promise God gives His people is that He will be with them--to guide, protect and deliver them. *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me* (Psalm 23:4).

HE HAS RANSOMED (43:3-4)

This statement is evidence of the truth of what we studied back in chapter 40 when the nations were compared to God and Isaiah proclaim Yahweh's sovereignty over rulers, judges and nations (15-17, 23-24). History tells us that Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba (both areas just south of Egypt) were subjugated under the dynasty of Cyrus—who was God's servant (45:1) to release the Israelites from captivity. To get to Egypt, Cyrus had to go through Palestine, putting him in control of that area which allowed him to send the Jewish captives back home. God gave up those people to assure His own people were ransomed from captivity.

Think on that a bit—if God goes to such extremes for His people Israel and went to such an extreme as giving His own Son to redeem and ransom His

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people what could possibly persuade or overthrow Him to take those people away from Him. Jesus said, *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand* (John 10:27-29). What a great assurance God has given to His children.

HE WILL GATHER THOSE HE HAS CALLED, CREATED AND FORMED (43:5-7)

God goes on to promise that He will gather all that He has called, created and formed. All who are called by God's name will be delivered and they will be gathered together instead of being scattered to the four winds. God's people will be back in their land with their own. A great promise indeed, in light of the captivity they were in. Again this same imagery is found in the New Testament when Paul writes, *For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins* (Colossians 1:13-14).

II. GOD'S CHALLENGE

As you read this passage, imagine that you are in a big courtroom.

Isaiah 43:8-13 Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes, And the deaf, even though they have ears. ⁹All the nations have gathered together So that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this and proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified, or let them hear and say, "It is true." ¹⁰"You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, there will be none after Me. ¹¹"I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me. ¹²"It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And I am God. ¹³"Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?"

As the defense attorney defending Himself, God calls out the blind and deaf. These "blind and deaf" are those referenced in the previous chapter who

worshipped carved images whom God will redeem and restore. He, in the midst of the witnesses, challenges the nations to see if their gods can declare what He is going to do (similar to Isaiah 41:21-29); and then mocks the gods to hear and affirm what is going to happen, but they cannot affirm for they are unable to hear.

Since there is none who can declare these things, God turns to the "blind and deaf" that He has redeemed, ransomed, and called to be His witnesses. He has chosen them to be His servants that they may know and believe Him. That they may know He is the only One who saves. That they may know He is the only One who declares and does. That they may know that He is the Eternal One and no one can stop Him from giving aid to His children.

III. GOD'S GLORY

With His work and His challenge in mind, what is God's reason for redeeming His people? Why does He call in the blind and deaf to bear witness to what He has done and will do? In spite of His people turning away from Him and turning to idols; in spite of their blatant disobedience; in spite of their treatment toward others, He still redeemed, created, and called His people. Why? Isaiah 43:7 states "...for My glory." The reason behind all God's works in the redemption, formation and calling of a people was for His name's sake--"for My glory."

Later in Isaiah, God states it in another way:

Isaiah 48:9-11 "For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, And for My praise I restrain it for you, in order not to cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another.

God's work in redeeming and restoring His people is just one example of the Scripture's overall teaching that God does all things for the glory and praise of His name. In today's culture and society, this may not be something applaudable. If it was stated about some person that he or she "does everything for their own glory and praise", it is usually meant in derogatory way; it is not meant to be a compliment. In saying "God does all

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things for His glory”, it may sound like God is on a big ego trip that would seem to be beneath Him.

I want to address that objection with these three thoughts:

#1 The first thought is from Tony Evans, pastor in the Dallas area who writes:

At first glance, that strikes some people wrong. Something doesn't sound right about it. It sounds like God's got the big head. But here is one place where human logic doesn't work.

If you and I get absorbed in our own glory, we've got a problem. First, because we focus on untrue things. We begin to deceive ourselves. Second, we start forgetting about things we can't do. We begin to think we can leap tall buildings. Third, we focus on things that are flawed by sin. We begin to mess with stuff better left alone.

God can pursue His glory because He has perfect glory. God does not pursue His glory to gain something He lacks. God has everything He needs. He pursues His own glory because He could aspire to no greater goal than Himself. He is the apex of everything.² (p. 255)

What Dr. Evans is saying is that God displays His glory because there is nothing more glorious for God to display. If He were at a “show and tell,” what would He bring? Some aspect of His creation? Something that His creation has produced? No, the greatest thing He could bring to “show and tell” is Himself; to display Himself by performing great and awesome deeds and by proclaiming what is to come and then doing it. Therefore, anything else would be truly be beneath Him and not worthy of Him.

#2 The second thought is found in this question: Throughout this whole passage (and the many others that describe God's glory), who is receiving the benefits of God displaying His greatness? It is His people.

It is His people who have been forgiven and redeemed; who have His comfort and assistance; who have His protection; who have been set free, who have been loved; who will be gathered; who have been formed and created. It is His people who witness His great works and declare them.

Friend, the best thing for God's people is for their God to “show off.” When human beings to “show off” it is usually to the detriment of other people--whether it be seeking gain at others expense or promoting oneself by tearing down another or being so self-absorbed that one does not see (or care to see) the plight of others. But in working to display His greatness, it is

not to the disadvantage of His people, but for their advantage. God's people reap the benefits of God displaying His greatness.

#3 The third thought is more like a challenge. We, as human beings, do not care much for this doctrine because it makes us realize that we are not the center of the universe. God did not deliver, redeem, ransom, call and form us into His people because we are so wonderful and are much deserving. He delivered, redeemed, ransomed, called and formed us into His people because it was the most glorious thing for Him to do.

Think about this: God could have destroyed Adam and Eve the moment after they sinned. He could judge and eliminate each one of us immediately after our first, second, tenth or thousandth sin. He could have set the number of “strikes” and then call us “out.” He has that right and it would be fine for Him to display His glory in executing justice in the universe. But it was more glorious for Him to redeem, ransom, call and form a holy people from unholy people.

Yes, it is true that He loves people (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8), but have you ever wondered “why”? Why does God still show love toward rebellious, hateful, sin-filled, obstinate people like me and you? Because to love is more glorious to His holy name. Remember friend, none of this is really about us; it is all about Him--but we are the ones who receive the gracious benefits.

Therefore, let us be so very humble before Him. And lift up His name in all glory, honor and praise.

Revelation 4:11 Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.

To God be the Glory, Great things He has done.

This great God can forgive your sins; are you interested?

¹ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 141.

² Tony Evans, *Our God is Awesome* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 255.