

Isaiah 44:6-8

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over the years, we have listened to the pitiful refrain: "It doesn't make any difference what people believe about God, as long as they believe in something." And this pitiful refrain: "It doesn't make any difference what church you go to, as long as you go to church." I would say that now these refrains run like this: "It doesn't make any difference what people believe about God and it really doesn't make any difference if they believe at all." And the church? "Why go to church?"

This morning, we're confronted with . . .

THE ONE AND ONLY ONE

I. There Is No Other.

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen." (vv. 6-7)

It's simple, more so than the absurdities laid on the conscience of God's people by the low, and unimpressive, scholars of the day: There's only one God. And with Him His Redeemer (you heard that from the text, right? "Thus says the Lord, the king of Israel, and **his Redeemer**"!); that is, the Messiah, the Christ, our Lord Jesus. This is critical to our understanding. The Lord, who is the king of Israel, (Israel ultimately referring to the church of both Old and New Testaments) is the Redeemer; the One Who must do all things necessary to purchase His people from sin, death and hell.

Jesus verifies this with a myriad of statements recorded in the New Testament. You have heard them all many times, individually. When you put them together it becomes overwhelming. Jesus said, "If you knew me, you would know my Father also." - you would know God! (Jn. 8:19b) And this: "I and the Father are one (that is, one in essence - God!)." (Jn. 10:30) And this: "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me (God!)." (Jn. 12:45) And this: "Whoever hates me hates my Father also." - God! (Jn. 15:23) And this: "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." (God!) (Jn. 5:23b) And this: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jn. 14:9) Redeemer and God! And the list is not exhausted!

Is it really shocking that billions of dollars and untold hours have been spent by liberal theologians, Hollywood, television and atheists to feverishly disprove Scripture? And do you understand on what they base their proof? Speculation, opinion and some scattered, ancient writings by some of the first liberal theologians, skeptics and haters of God's Word. And do you know why? Because Scriptures condemn all humans as unworthy of God's love because of sin and emphatically declare, "No one comes to the Father except through (Jesus)." And human arrogance cannot tolerate that! The Bible stands alone. It defies human reasoning.

And listen to this: concerning all other gods, the Almighty God says, "Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen." My friends, the Christian Bible demonstrates what secular history prefers to erase: Prophecies of future events that came to light after the prophecies, and are coming to light at this moment, and prophecies pointing to this world's final moment! And all of it is intrinsically part of the flow of human history.

There is One God and only One God, and this world moves as He determines; this world will end as He determines. God says, "for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning...saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" (Is. 45:9-10) This world does and will move as He wills. Concerning this world's arrogance

and unbelief, the Psalmist declares, “He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them (the world!) in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury...” (Ps. 2:4-5) And the “derision” part? God **holds them** in their mockery and ridicule. Look at what the world has become: Global derision!! And we must connect to that the Holy Spirit’s chilling judgement: “Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thess. 2:11-12) They will be permanently locked in their unbelief and delusion.

II. A Reality.

And look at the church. Look at the mess of the church today as a consequence of its lust for human reasoning! Several months ago, I wrote a letter to one of our very supportive members regarding this issue in the context of worship; not to correct the person but to uplift and reassure because of the person’s strong witness. I stated the following:

“Over the years we have watched the Contemporary Worship Movement methodically bring worship into the context of entertainment. Almost all Contemporary forms we have observed inevitably begin to compromise the Word, or limit what parts of the Word will be magnified, and avoid all parts of the Word that would cause offense to culturally tuned ears! Once people are hooked and excited by the cult of personality and the entertainment motif it is difficult, if not impossible, to bring them into a Scriptural understanding of ongoing repentance, the need for confrontation with sin and the reality that we are standing before the Almighty God who brought the Psalmist to confession: “My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgements.” (Psalm 119:120) Then we are lifted to the Gospel - the forgiveness (of sin) and eternal life through Jesus Christ. From there, we consider our walk with the Lord in this world and preparation for the world to come.

“To write off formal (liturgical) worship as something of the past - especially in light of what it reverently presents regarding the Word and Sacraments - is to ignore the Lord’s Word: “For I the Lord do not change...” (Malachi 3:6a) It is a failure to grasp the Word: ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.’ (Hebrews 13:7). It is, to say the least, offensive in every way.”

In that letter, I also quoted the very simple and obvious verse, “Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 9:15) God, as He presents Himself to us in the Scripture, is *The One and Only One!*

And, finally, the following from our text . . .

III. We Know and We Are to Witness!

“Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.” (v. 8)

You know, it really isn’t that hard. Why would any of us ever allow anyone, or group, suggest anything different from that which we have received from God’s Word? We have the Word - 66 Books of the Bible - the place where God speaks to us. Is the sinful mind of another sinful human really going to give us something new and enlightening? Didn’t God just say, “Have I not told you from of old and declared it?”

And through the Word we daily live with and walk in that great and glorious promise Jesus proclaimed to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." (Jn. 11:25-26) Isn't this to be on our minds? That moment when we are face to face with the Triune God and forever and ever embraced by His unchangeable love?

But, also, consider from our text the words, "And you are my witnesses!" That's why you still walk this earth, friends. That's why I still walk this earth. We are God's witnesses to His mercy, forgiveness and eternal love through Jesus Christ. And we are witnesses to this world's impending, final moment.

There was that moment when Jesus declared:

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive... (Jn. 7:38-39a)

Commentator, Gary Baumler writes,

"God's Holy Spirit leads thirsty souls to Jesus. He works the faith that drinks the refreshment Jesus offers. The Spirit enters the heart of a believer, and the believer calls others to learn of Jesus." (Gary P. Baumler, *John, People's Bible Commentary*, CPH, St. Louis, 1997, p. 118)

We have life - life! - eternal! The question is: What are we doing with it while we wait for the day of entrance into eternal joy with *The One and Only One*?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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Isaiah 44:6-8: ***“The One and Only One”***

I. There Is No Other.

II. A Reality.

III. We Know and We Are to Witness!

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