

WE BELIEVE IN GOD

Isaiah 46:5-13

As much as at any time in the history of mankind, we live in an age of skepticism. From the classroom to the courtroom to the barroom to the boardroom to the locker room to the newsroom, more people do not believe in the God of the Bible than ever before. Nor do they believe in the moral standards of the Bible. And consequently most people live their lives just as they did over 3000 years ago in the day of the judges. And that is, according to Judges 21:25, everyone did what was right in his own eyes. And so it is no wonder that broken lives are scattered over the landscape of humanity like feathers in the wind. For God says that without a vision, that is, without a word from God, without guidance from God, the people perish (Pvbs. 29:18).

But not only are people perishing as they act according to their own depraved consciences, they violently push back against any Christian who tries to introduce them to Jesus Christ. They accuse us of being hypocrites and reply, "How dare you tell me that your way is better than mine. If it is, prove it to me". And that is precisely the point where many of us wimp out and turn and run like scalded dogs. Because although we are saved, sometimes we don't know what we really believe as Christians, and at other times we don't know why we believe what we believe. And as a result many people remain in darkness because we don't know enough to show them the light.

Now, I'm not saying that we have to have all the answers to the deep theological questions of the ages to be a witness for Jesus, but I am saying this. Peter says that we should always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15). And we should always be ready to let a skeptic know what Jesus Christ has done for us. But going even further than that, as much as possible we should be like Apollos. Luke writes that Apollos vigorously refuted the Jews, showing them through the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:28). Apollos knew what he believed and knew how to defend it with Scripture. And we need to be able not only to defend our own faith, but we need to be able to defend the faith, the body of truth which we believe and upon which we've staked our lives. Jude puts it this way. He said that it was necessary for him to write his epistle in order to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (v. 3).

So today we are going to begin a series of messages on what we believe as born again followers of Jesus Christ, that we may be better equipped to contend for our faith. Turn in your Bibles, please, to Isaiah 46: 5-13. The title of the message today is, We Believe in God. Now, some of you might be wondering why we would begin our series with such a subject. Do not all of us believe in God? I would hope so, but this is not an automatic. Bible teacher Lee Strobel was an atheist before he

was saved as a young adult, and says that he found an open door to atheism in a 9th grade biology class, where he learned that back in 1953 that a man named Stanley Morgan created life in a test tube. And as Strobel himself put it, if life could be explained solely by natural processes, then God was out of a job. So as a 9th grader he got his jump start into atheism.

Well, you just may be like Lee Strobel. You may have heard something in a high school or college class that has made you become a closet atheist, or at least a skeptic, you're not really sure if there is a God or not. Or you may believe in God, but not the God of the Bible. You believe that there are many ways to God, not just the Bible's way. But undoubtedly most of us have this issue settled. We believe in God. But why do you believe in God and what is He like?

Well, beloved, it is not my purpose this morning to convince any of you that God exists. There are many fine books I will be glad to refer you to that refute any reasonable doubt. But today I want to show you from the Bible what God is like. You may be thinking, "But I don't believe the Bible". Well, come back next week and we'll help you with that issue. But today I want us to at least see some things the Bible says about the God Who we are to worship and serve. What is this God like? We cannot see Him. We do not hear Him speak in an audible voice. So how do you get to know someone you can't see with your eyes and hear with your ears? Well, in our text God Himself speaks through Isaiah and tells us a number of things about Himself that He wants us to know. And from our study today I want us to come away with one unshakable truth embedded in our hearts – **God is a great and mighty God and a loving God Who deserves our complete and total devotion.**

So what do we see about God from the Scriptures that lead us to this deduction? First of all, God tells us that He is **sovereign**, that He is the ruler of the universe (1 Tim. 6:15). Look at v. 9. God simply says here that He is the only one of His class. There are not other gods in the heavens that are competing with Him for first place as "God of the Year". Look back at 45:5a, 6b, 18, 22. Beloved, that's four times in one chapter that God, repeats Himself verbatim saying that He is God alone. The only variation is that in three of these verses God says, "I am the LORD" – I am YAHWEH". That is the personal name for God in the Bible. The name for the God of the Jews, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Beloved, God is being as specific as He can possibly be here. Every other god other than the personal God of the Jews is a false god – it is no god at all.

But the one and only true God, the God of the Jews, has gone one step further than this to reveal Himself to the human race. Heb. 1:2 says that in these last days God has spoken to us by His Son. And the writer goes on to say that God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person. God is saying that in Jesus we see Him. We see God Himself. John writes the same thing in John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word.....and the Word was God". And Jesus says that same thing about Himself to Philip in John 14:9: "...He

who has seen me has seen the Father...” So this is the God Who says in Isaiah that He and He alone is God. He is the God Who has revealed Himself in Jesus.

Now, beloved, there is no more inflammatory truth in the whole world than the truth that in Jesus we see God. Because Jesus said that if we do not believe this we do not honor God. Jesus said in John 5:23, “...all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him” (Jn. 5:23). But you see every religion in the world except Christianity does not honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

The Jews certainly do not honor Jesus. They say He was an imposter, a phony Messiah. The Dome of the Rock is the famous Muslim temple in Jerusalem. And on the side of The Dome of the Rock is written these words: “God has no son”. So the Muslims certainly do not honor Jesus as they do the Father. The Mormons believe that Jesus attained Godhood in his preexistent state, which means he worked for it and earned it. They also believe that Jesus was not begotten by the Holy Spirit but by God the father, that God had a body and that He had relations with Mary in order for her to conceive. And they in no way equate Jesus with God. And of course, every other world religion degrades the Son of God just as the Jews, the Muslims, and the Mormons. And all who belong to these religions worship false gods and unless they turn to the only true God they will spend eternity in Hell. John writes in 1 John 5:20, “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we many know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life”. Only in Jesus Christ do we have eternal life.

So the first thing that God tells us about Himself is that He is the One and only, and we’ve also seen that He is the Father of Jesus Christ. But God makes another claim for Himself in v. 10. Look at it (“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done...”). What is God saying to us here? He is saying, “I know the future. I know what will happen a year from now, a hundred years from now, a thousand years from now”. But there is a reason that He knows the future. Not because He simply can see out ahead what choices that humans will make, but because He causes them to make the choices that they make that will fulfill His perfect will.

Look at the latter part of v. 10 again. God says in v. 10, “My counsel will stand”. A better word for counsel is the word “purpose”. Friends, our great God has a purpose for His universe and it will stand!! He is not about to let the puny imps of hell thwart His perfect purpose! He did not just create the universe, wind it up like a top, set it to spinning and let it spin off in any direction that it chooses. No! He has been in control of the course of history every step of the way, because He is the all-powerful God, who does all His pleasure.

V. 11 is a perfect example. V. 11 states that God will call a bird of prey from the east, a man who will execute God’s purpose from a far country. And history reveals the obvious fulfillment of this prophesy was Cyrus, the Persian king who issued the

decree that allowed the Jews to return to their homeland after 70 years of captivity, about 150 years after Isaiah prophesied that he would. Look at v. 11b again. God says, "I've stated my purpose, and I'm going to do it". And He shaped a heathen king's will and guided his actions as the means of getting it done.

But we see the sovereignty of God taught clearly from Genesis to Revelation. The very first incident is in Gen. 3:15, when God told the serpent that the Seed of the woman would bruise his head, and he would bruise the Seed's heel. And He was talking about, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ and his defeat of Satan at the cross. At the cross the purpose of God for man's redemption was fulfilled. And all the devil's temptations from the wilderness in the beginning to Gethsemane at the end could not stop it. But we see God's purposes fulfilled in His raising up Pharaoh in Egypt, in His sending Joseph as a slave to Egypt, and in the actions of Judas and Pilate that sent Jesus to the cross. And we can see God's obvious hand in the outcome of battles fought in wars across the ages, especially in our fight for freedom in the Revolutionary War. That's the reason it has been said many times that history is actually His Story.

The old Southern Baptist statesman W.A. Criswell wrote, "Above the earth and its history presides a sovereign Lord who guides the events of time and tides according to His foreknowledge and His elective choice". Well said, Dr. Criswell. But Solomon beat him to the punch by almost 3000 years. Solomon wrote in Prov. 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap, but every decision is from the LORD". God even directs the roll of the dice or the flip of a coin when men think their decisions are left to chance. Friends, history really is His Story.

So how does this precious truth of God's foreknowledge and direction affect you and me? Well, if you are a child of God it gives you the magnificent, unshakable peace of God deep down in your soul. For while the free gift of salvation is a genuine offer to every single person in this world, if you are saved today you have been mysteriously chosen by God to be His before the foundation of the world, and His grand purpose of salvation in your life would not be denied. And you know that you will persevere to the end, for Paul writes that He that has begun a good work in you will complete until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). And you know that whatever comes into your life, whether it be ill health, or financial ruin, or the unexpected death of a loved one, or some other personal tragedy, whatever it is, it has been sifted through the loving hands of your Heavenly Father, for all things work together for good to those who love God (Rom. 8:28). And you know that you are going to make it through. And you also know that no matter how shaky and uncertain times get in this old wicked world, you are still safer than the gold in Ft. Knox. For He has said, "Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed. For I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Is. 41:1)

So we've seen that the God we worship is the one and only God. And we've seen that He is a God Who knows the future because He has a perfect purpose for the future that is guaranteed by His own Word to come to pass. But there is

something else about God I want us to learn this morning. Look at v. 13. **Beloved, God is a God Who is righteous. He is perfect in every way.**

All of us know that we live in a world of injustice. I've been told that it is a scary thing to go to court, even when you know that you are innocent. And that's because our justice system is oftentimes so perverted. I read a few months ago where a couple in England who owned a bed and breakfast were forced by the government to rent rooms to homosexuals, in direct violation of their consciences. But this is but the tip of the iceberg. Every day we read or hear of someone who has been abused or killed. But human injustice and the suffering that it causes is just the way it is in this old world. Isaiah wrote that there were people in his day who called evil good and good evil (5:20). And times have certainly not changed in 2600 years.

But even worse that men perverting justice and acting in ungodliness is the fact that in many cases their motivation comes from their god. Why did the heathen throw their babies in the fire in OT days? Because their gods told them to. Why do Muslims plot and carry out mass murders? Because Koran says this, "Whenever the sacred months are over slay the idolaters wherever you find them"(9:5). Why do Mormons practice polygamy, even allowing men to marry twelve year old children if they wish? Why is it reported that Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church had as many as 48 wives? Because their god gives them permission.

But beloved, we can rejoice in the fact that the one true God, the God Who is sovereign over you and me and the entire world, is a God Who is righteous in every action toward the sons of men. Never, ever has He acted unfairly toward you, and never ever has He inspired an unfair act toward you. He has only acted toward you in perfect fairness, mercy, and grace. God is not an angry, capricious god who casts down lightning bolts from His throne on his subjects when he just happens to be in a bad mood. God has no moods. His emotions of delight and anger are always justified, whenever He expresses them. And whatever you receive from God's hand, you can know that you deserved it or that it was a gracious gift that you could never deserve. So if you didn't get that promotion, God was not to blame. If you are a modern day Job and have lost everything precious to you, God has not been unfair. You may not understand why, but you can know for certain that as the Psalmist said, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (Ps. 145).

But there is another thing about God's righteousness that we must remember. Many times we look around and we grieve at the prosperity of the wicked. The wicked sin and sin and it seems they are never punished. But listen to the word of the Lord: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; **I will repay**, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). Friend, don't worry about the prosperity of the wicked. There is a judgment day a comin'. And we can rejoice that one day the books will all be balanced and the debts will all be paid. And sinners will be punished and God's righteous rule will be ushered in forever more!

And that brings us to the last characteristic of God that Isaiah writes about in our text. God says in v. 13 that He is a God of righteousness, but He ends by saying that He is a God of salvation (“...my salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory”). And being a God of salvation declares to us that God is a God of love. You see, beloved, Israel never ever deserved the salvation of God. Jeremiah describes Israel as a donkey in heat, who runs after any and everything she can possibly mate with. And that’s the way Israel was from only weeks after she became a nation, when she went whoring after false gods in the wilderness while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments. Oh, but God was always pursuing His people in love, forgiving them and bringing them back to Himself and blessing them once again. And beloved, that’s what God is still doing today. He is still calling lost people to salvation and still calling His children to walk with Him and serve Him that He might bless them,

I want us to turn back to one verse in Isaiah 33 to sum up all that we’ve said about what God is like this morning. Isaiah 33:22.

- Friends, the great God we’ve been talking about today is our judge. We will all give an account to him one day for our deeds, whether they be good or bad. (Rom. 14:10).
- God is our lawgiver. It is not our own ideas of right and wrong we live by, but by the precepts of this blessed Book.
- God is our King. Praise God, He is the almighty King and He is the righteous King! His is in control of the course of this universe and He will fulfill His perfect purposes. And He will never judge us unfairly.
- God is our Savior! He will save all who trust in Jesus His Son and grant them entrance into His righteous kingdom to reign with Him forever and ever!