

God Acts
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Allen Power

Isaiah 46:3-13

On Wednesday (or whenever the votes are counted) half the country will be in a funk; depressed and despondent about the outcome. Some may be violent and destructive. Those of us who really serve the one true God will not be devastated. Disappointed? Perhaps. Disillusioned about our political process? Fair enough. However, those of us who trust in the wisdom and power of the One true God will not be devastated because we believe His counsel will stand and He will accomplish His purposes though perhaps in ways we never expected.

Looking back on the history of my life I've often said, "Thank you Lord for not allowing ME to write the "script" of my life." Think of the pain I would have experienced and the blessings I would have missed if I had written the script!

As God unfolds His plan and purpose for the world and for your life, have you ever asked for a "re-write" of the screenplay? Have you ever tried to pry the pen from His Sovereign hand so YOU could make a few corrections to His plan? Who are we to "edit" the Sovereign plans of the Creator of the Universe? Yet, our own human tendency is to question the wisdom of His will.

Big Idea: God is Sovereign, faithful, and incomparable. He is the one true God Who keeps His promises and will complete His plan and purpose for His people and His world, but He often does it in a way we didn't expect or desire. We need to trust His way instead of trying to insist on our own way.

- That was the situation for the people of Judah when the Prophet Isaiah gave them a preview of things to come because of their sins against God.
- The Babylonian Empire would destroy Judah and carry most of their people away to live in exile for 70 years in Babylon.

- No doubt they were questioning whether God really had a plan since this didn't seem like a good one.
- They were likely questioning whether God was in control because had THEY been in control they would have done things very differently.
- They couldn't imagine God's surprising plan to save and restore His people. After the 70 years in exile, He would use the Persian King, Cyrus as His instrument to conquer Babylon and return Judah to their homeland.
- Because things weren't going their way there was a risk that the people of Judah would put their faith in idols instead of trusting the one true God.
- Their future captors, the Babylonians worshipped false idols that they created from wood, silver, and gold.
- In captivity the exiles from Judah would be surrounded by idol worship, so God sent Isaiah to warn them with a comparison between Himself, the one true God and those powerless man-made idols.
- Fast-forward to the scene as Cyrus of Persia is moving in on Babylon.
- The Babylonians are loading their stuff to escape. Their man-made idols can't rescue them; THEY have to rescue the man-made idols.

¹ Bel and Nebo, the gods of Babylon, bow as they are lowered to the ground. They are being hauled away on ox carts. The poor beasts stagger under the weight. ² Both the idols and their owners are bowed down. The gods cannot protect the people, and the people cannot protect the gods. They go off into captivity together.

- Then God reminds His people Who He is and how He cares for them.

³ "Listen to me, descendants of Jacob, all you who remain in Israel. I have cared for you since you were born. Yes, I carried you before you were born. ⁴ I will be your God throughout your lifetime— until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.

- From the womb to the tomb and then for eternity, God “carries” and saves His people. He’s proven this time and again but in our humanity we sometimes trust in man-made things for our security rather than Him.
- What if my party loses? What if my 401k drops? What if the economy tanks further and I lose my job? All those are real concerns but the one true God says, *“I have cared for you since you were born...I will be your God throughout your lifetime...I made you and I will care for you.”*

Isaiah 41:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

- We serve the one true God and He will carry us in every situation.
- Next, God reminded them of just how powerful He is.
- I’ve often quoted the opening words of A.W. Tozer’s little book, *“The Knowledge of the Holy:” “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”*
- Here is what SHOULD come to mind when we think of our God:

⁵ “To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal? ⁶ Some people pour out their silver and gold and hire a craftsman to make a god from it. Then they bow down and worship it! ⁷ They carry it around on their shoulders, and when they set it down, it stays there. It can’t even move! And when someone prays to it, there is no answer. It can’t rescue anyone from trouble.

- I think about Elijah going up against the priests of Baal in 1 Kings 18.
- The priests of Baal yelled to the false god for fire to consume the sacrifice:

²⁷ ...Elijah began mocking them. “You’ll have to shout louder,” he scoffed, “for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is daydreaming, or is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!”

²⁸ So they shouted louder, and following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out.

²⁹ They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no sound, no reply, no response. ⁱ

- Baal had no power but the one true God did. Later in that passage we read that God sent fire to consume that waterlogged sacrifice.
- Why trust in man-made idols when you can trust in the one true God?
- We can trust Him because He has a track record of faithfulness.

⁸ “Do not forget this! Keep it in mind! Remember this, you guilty ones.

⁹ Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.

- Christ-followers worship, serve, and trust the incomparable one true God.
- He is holy, just, all-powerful, all knowing, and always present.
- He is unchanging and He cannot lie. (Mal. 3:6; Num. 23:19)
- He created everything and He is in control of everything.
- Why would we put our trust in men or man-made things for our security?
- The one true God also has a plan, often one we can't predict or imagine.

¹⁰ Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.

- Steven Lawson: *“God can declare the future because He determines the future.”ⁱⁱ*
- God's surprising plan was to use another foreign king named Cyrus.

¹¹ I will call a swift bird of prey from the east— a leader from a distant land to come and do my bidding. I have said what I would do, and I will do it. ¹² “Listen to me, you stubborn people who are so far from doing right. ¹³ For I am ready to set things right, not in the distant

future, but right now! I am ready to save Jerusalem and show my glory to Israel.

- Why didn't God raise up a king from Judah to return the exiles?
- Good question; let's ask Him in Heaven!
- We know from the book of Isaiah that God would raise up the ultimate King from the people of Judah, the Messiah. In this chapter of Judah's story, God would fulfill His plan in a surprising way using Cyrus of Persia.
- As we said earlier, God keeps His promises and will complete His plan but He often does it in a way we didn't expect or desire.
- We need to trust His way instead of trying to insist on our own way, but trusting can be hard when it seems evil is prevailing over good.
- That reminds me of Psalm 73 (a Psalm of Asaph.)
- The Psalmist admitted in verse one: ¹ *Truly God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure.* ² *But as for me, I almost lost my footing. My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.* ³ *For I envied the proud when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.* ⁱⁱⁱ
- He's asking the classic question: Why do the wicked prosper and God's faithful people often suffer?
- Then in Psalm 73:17 he says he went into God's sanctuary and *"finally understood the destiny of the wicked."* He confesses to God, *"I was so foolish and ignorant!"* Then having come to his senses, the Psalmist speaks the truth about the incomparable one true God we serve:

²³ Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand. ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. ²⁶ My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Here are some good thoughts from the Holman Old Testament commentary:

"God is faithful. He does what he promises. The problem is that we sometimes place limits on the way God should fulfill his

promises. If he does not do things our way, then something is wrong with the world. The Creator of the universe knows better than we do what is right, good, and just, because he himself is right, good, and just. He can choose to use a Cyrus of Persia or a Martin Luther King or a Mother Teresa or even a Mahatma Gandhi to do his will and help bring his purposes to pass. He can also use you if you are willing to let him do things his way rather than insisting on your own way.”^{iv}

- None of us will go home today and pray to idols of wood or gold.
- However, in these times of chaos and unrest we can sometimes question God’s plan and tend to look to man-made things for security.
- Our Heavenly Father reminds us: *“I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.”*
- As Charles Spurgeon wrote: *“World events are not tangled, confused, or perplexing to God... The storm may rage, but all is well, for our Captain is the governor of storms. He who trod the waves of the Galilean lake is at the helm, and at His command winds and waves are quiet (Matt. 14:27).”^v*
- God doesn’t ask us to understand His plans, just to trust that He will bring them to pass for our good and His glory.

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (1 Ki 18:27–29). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=10300985440>

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Ps 73:1–3). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} Butler, Trent. *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Isaiah* (p. 255). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

^v C H Spurgeon - "Beside Still Waters"