

### I. WHAT'S AT STAKE IN PURSUING A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUE GOD?

#### A. Why We Must Know God

A. W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, p. 9: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

Tozer's principle: later on p. 9: "We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God."

Tozer's principle restated:

cf. Psalm 115:8; 135:18; Hosea 9:10

David F. Wells, God in the Wasteland, p. 88: "It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless. I do not mean by this that he is ethereal but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable."

#### B. Scriptural Support Underscoring Our Need to Know God

Isaiah 11:9b: For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Jeremiah 9:23-24: Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 31:31, 34: "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, . . . And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

# LEAD<sup>®</sup> FOR THOSE WHO DO OR WANT TO

"BEHOLDING THE GOD OF  
MERCIFUL HOLINESS"  
SESSION 1

Philippians 3:7-10: But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

## II. KNOWING GOD AS TRANSCENDENT AND IMMANENT

Isaiah 57:15: For thus says the high and exalted One, who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the spirit of the contrite."

### I. INTRODUCTION: GOD'S LOVE AS COMPLEX, NOT SIMPLE

Universal Love — John 3:16

Redemptive-Covenantal Love — Ephesians 1:5; Romans 9:13; Ephesians 5:25

### II. GOD'S REDEMPITIVE-COVENANTAL LOVE EXTOLLED IN ISAIAH 43:1-7

#### A. God's Redemptive-Covenantal Formation on His People Established (43:1)

- “But now” — God’s judgment of his people (42:23-25) now turns to merciful salvation, in a way reminiscent, for NT believers, of Ephesians 2:4 that follows 2:1-3
- Yahweh, God’s special name as the Covenant God of Israel (cf. Exodus 3:13-15), is invoked
- “Your Creator” and “He who formed you” pick up terms from Genesis 1:1, 27 (bara) and 2:7 (yatsar) where God “creates” the universe, and “creates” man as male and female, and “forms” man from the dust of the ground — but here Isaiah 43:1 applies them to Israel created to be God’s people, formed as God’s own possession
- As His own people, He has pledged to save them, using here the term is to “redeem,” i.e., to buy them out of slavery, to purchase them at great cost since they are His own people — anticipating the forthcoming discussion of Israel’s exodus from their bondage and slavery in Egypt (43:3-4)
- God has called them by name, i.e., Jacob called Israel (Genesis 32:28; 35:10), which is the order of names in 43:1. To name is to demonstrate one’s rightful authority over and possession of the one named. And because He has named Jacob Israel, He says of Israel, “you are Mine!”

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## "BEHOLDING THE GOD OF REDEMPTIVE-COVENANTAL LOVE" SESSION 2

### B. God's Redemptive-Covenantal Commitment to His People Expressed (43:2)

- Waters, river, fire — all symbols here of harm and destruction, and symbols of forces that can overpower their victims so they are rendered helpless apart from external intervention
- The people needn't fear (43:2, 5) for one profound and glorious reason: "I will be with you" — expresses God's special covenant commitment to this people alone. This might be thought of as the "manifest presence" of the omnipresent God, i.e., God demonstrates His powerful presence in providing protection and salvation
- "I" and "you" stressed, as in "I will be with you," but seen over and over in these verses — count them: eleven "you's" and "your's" in 42:1-2 alone! What a commitment God has toward these, the people of His creating, His making, His forming, and His naming.

### C. God's Redemptive-Covenantal Love for His People Expanded (43:3-4)

- Who is this God? The "Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel" Yes, He is God over all, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. But as Israel's shema declares (Deut 6:4), "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!"
- The price of redemption here is given — Egypt, Cush and Seba are given in exchange for the lives of His own people. Consider afresh the exodus of Israel from Egypt — Exodus 4:21-23
- Crucial question raised by this text: is it possible that something about Israel commended her to God, so that His salvation of Israel, but not Egypt, has something to do with Israel's relative goodness or uprightness when compared to Egypt? See the answer given in Ezekiel 20:4-10!
- So, what explains the favoritism shown to Israel, God's particular redemption of her, not Egypt? Answer: "Since you are precious in My sight, since you are honored and I love you"
- The exodus, God's greatest saving act in the OT, anticipates the cross, God's greatest saving event ever, where God is Christ has mercy on whom He chooses, but He does so in the cross by giving His own Son
- The greatest display of God's love can only be seen against the backdrop of His just judgment of sin (cf. Romans 9:22-23)

### D. God's Redemptive-Covenantal Pledge to His People Extended (43:5-6)

- God's covenant commitment to His people is the basis for the opening admonition of 43:5, "Do not fear, for I am with you" (cf. 43:2)
- Now, God's commitment to His own people is extended from the generation of the exodus deliverance (43:3-4) to those in the future exile whom God will bring from afar and gather together as His own people
- The certainty of this future salvation is seen in the two-fold divine, "I will!!!!" (43:5 and 6)
- The extensiveness of this future salvation is seen in the directional terms—east, west, north, south, afar, ends of the earth—and the use of "sons" and "daughters," i.e., everyone from everywhere of My people, says the Lord, I will bring back!
- Notice the complexity of God's relationship with His people—through the prophet Isaiah God, on the one hand, warns of the certainty of upcoming judgment and exile (e.g., Isaiah 10:5-14; 22:1-14; 29:1-16; 32:9-14) while at the same time He promises ultimate deliverance, redemption, salvation, and full restoration (e.g., Isaiah 11:1-16; parts of chs. 25, 26, 27; 29:17-24; 32:15-20; 43:1-7). Cf. Jer 32:42 for the expression of this truth in one verse.
- Here is an amazing and glorious truth from what we have seen: God's final word to His people is not a word of judgment (which they—we!—fully and eternally deserve) but rather it is a word of restoration, of healing, of forgiveness, of renewal, of salvation!

### E. God's Redemptive-Covenantal End for His People Extolled (43:7)

- Why, in the end, are these saved? Why are these the objects of God's kind and gracious restoration and forgiveness and final salvation? Answer: These comprise the grouping of "everyone who is called by My name," says the Lord. So, while they are called "by name" (43:1), so that they are His possession, the people of His making and forming and calling and naming, they are also, most importantly, called by His name (43:7), that is, their identity is wrapped up with God and His purposes, His character, His work, living to His honor.
- The end for which they are created, formed and made: They are called by His name so that they will live for His glory.

- But how shall they live for His glory? Our answer takes us back to the beginning of our study: They will live to His glory as they embrace the particular redemptive-covenantal love shown them, totally apart from any supposed merit of their own, that has created them, and called them, and saved them, as the objects of God's deepest and most profound love expressed within all of creation. Only as we embrace our election by God, our being called specially to be His people, can we enter into the fullness of His saving love—His redemptive-covenantal love—that He has for His own exclusively. And only then can we live to His glory, knowing the extent and richness of this love.

### III. CONCLUSION

As a wife is to relish, not resist, the exclusive love her husband has for her alone, so God's people only know His deepest human-directed love as we relish, not resist, the fully unmerited and undeserved exclusive love that God has for His people alone. These are the people of His making, of His redeeming, whom He has called by name, and who are called by His name. To know the saving love of God in Christ is to know not merely the universal love of God for all people, but it is to know especially and most deeply this redemptive-covenantal love that God has exclusively for His own people. As we close, hear afresh these precious words of comfort and admonition from 1 John:

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." (1 John 3:1-2)

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10)

So, embrace this special love, this redemptive-covenantal love of God for His own. Be humbled by it, be filled with joy over it, and be empowered to live lives that express the depth of our dependence upon and gratitude for such unspeakably lavish, costly, and undeserved love.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

A. Definition of Divine Sovereignty: God exhaustively plans and meticulously carries out his perfect will as he alone knows is best, regarding all that is in heaven and on earth, and he does so without failure or defeat, accomplishing his purposes in all of creation from the smallest details to the grand purposes of his plan for the whole of the created order.

B. Definition of Divine Sovereignty illustrated from two texts:

Daniel 4:34b-35: Nebuchadnezzar . . . blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

Ephesians 1:11: ". . . we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

## II. DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY EXHIBITED [ISAIAH 44:24-45:7]

A. God's Sovereign Control over Nature and Nations (44:24-27)

1. God's Sovereignty over Nature (44:24, 27)

a. Creator of heaven and earth (44:24)

b. Providential Ruler over land and sea (44:27)

2. God's Sovereignty over Nations (44:25-26)

a. God causes the declarations of the future by the false prophets to fail (44:25)

b. God causes the declarations of the future by his prophets to succeed (44:26a)

c. God causes world events to bring about the fulfillment of his promise to Jerusalem (44:26b)

### B. God's Sovereign Control over Cyrus (44:28-45:4)

1. God names "Cyrus" as his "shepherd," his "anointed," and king (44:28, 45:1, 3b, 4)
2. God governs the life and activities of the pagan king Cyrus (44:28-45:4)
  - a. God governs the life and development of the one named Cyrus (44:28, 45:1)
  - b. God governs the activities and successes of Cyrus as king (44:28-45:3)
  - c. God governs the life and activities of Cyrus, though Cyrus does not know God! (45:4-5)
  - d. God governs the life and activities of Cyrus for the sake of his people (44:28, 45:4)

### C. God's Sovereign Control over the Full "Spectrum" of life, both good and evil (45:5-7)

Isa 45:5-7: "I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord Who does all these."

1. Assertion of exclusive claim to deity (45:5-6)
2. Divine control of the full spectrum of light and darkness, well-being and calamity (45:7)
  - a. Spectrum of light and darkness, well-being and calamity
  - b. Strength of terminology especially for God's control of evil
  - c. Key Principle: God fully controls both good and evil yet, God is wholly good and is not evil in any respect whatsoever.

See Isaiah 45:7a, "the One forming light and creating darkness" along with 1 John 1:5b, "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."



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## "BEHOLDING THE GOD OF SOVEREIGN SUPREMACY" SESSION 3

See Isa 45:7b, "... causing well-being and creating calamity [ra]" along with Psalm 5:4, "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil [ra] dwells with You.

### d. Other Spectrum Texts

Deuteronomy 32:39: "See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand."

1 Samuel 2:6-7: The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. The Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low, and He also exalts.

Lamentations 3:37-38: Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth?

## III. DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY SHOWN TO BE COMPATIBLE WITH HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Genesis 45:4-8: "Then Joseph said to his brothers, . . . 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life . . . God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.'"

Isaiah 10:5-7, 12, 15: "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger, and the staff in whose hands is My indignation. send it against a godless nation, and commission it against the people of My fury, to capture booty and to seize plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets. Yet it does not so intend, nor does it plan so in its heart, but rather it is its purpose to destroy, and to cut off many nations . . . So it will be when the Lord has completed all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness . . . Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?'"

Acts 2:23; 4:27-28: "this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death . . . for truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

**IV. CONCLUSION AND APPLICATIONS**

A. Sovereignty and Suffering

B. Sovereignty and Supplication

C. Sovereignty and Salvation