

Our Sovereign God

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[0:00] Isaiah chapter 44 and verse 24. See a sovereign, gracious God at work speaking to his people in this passage.

! We're going to begin at verse 24 and read through the end of chapter 45. This is God's word. Who says of Jerusalem, It shall be inhabited. Of the towns of Judah, they shall be built, and of their ruins I will restore them. Who says to the watery deep, Be dry, and I will dry up your streams. Who says of Cyrus, He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please. He will say of Jerusalem, Let it be rebuilt, and of the temple, let its foundations be laid.

This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, Whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him And to strip kings of their armor, To open doors before him so that the gates will not be shut.

[1:27] I will go before you and will level the mountains. I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, Riches stored in secret places, So that you may know that I am the Lord, The God of Israel, Who summons you by name.

For the sake of Jacob my servant, Of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name, And bestow on you a title of honor, Though you do not acknowledge me.

I am the Lord, And there is no other. Apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, Though you have not acknowledged me. So that from the rising of the sun, To the place of its setting, Men may know there is none besides me.

I am the Lord, And there is no other. I form the light, And create darkness. I bring prosperity, And create disaster. I, the Lord, Do all these things.

You heavens above, Rain down righteousness. Let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide. Let salvation spring up. Let righteousness grow with it.

[2:37] I, the Lord, Have created it. Woe to him who quarrels with his maker. To him who is but a potsherd Among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, What are you making?

Does your work say, He has no hands. Woe to him who says to his father, What have you begotten? Or to his mother, What have you brought to birth? This is what the Lord says.

The Holy One of Israel, And its maker, Concerning things to come. Do you question me about my children, Or give me orders about the work of my hands?

It is I who made the earth, And created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens. I marshaled their starry host. I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness.

I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free. But not for a price or reward, Says the Lord Almighty. This is what the Lord says.

[3:41] The products of Egypt, And the merchandise of Cush, And those tall Sabeans, They will come over to you, And will be yours. They will trudge behind you, Coming over to you in chains.

They will bow down before you, And plead with you, Saying, Surely God is with you, And there is no other. There is no other God. Truly, You are a God who hides himself.

O God and Savior of Israel, All the makers of idols, Will be put to shame, And disgraced. They will go off into disgrace together.

But Israel will be saved by the Lord. With an everlasting salvation, You will never be put to shame or disgrace, To ages everlasting.

For this is what the Lord says, He who created the heavens, He is God. He who fashioned and made the earth, He founded it. He did not create it to be empty, But formed it to be inhabited.

[4:39] He said, I am the Lord, And there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, From somewhere in a land of darkness. I have not said to Jacob's descendants, Seek me in vain.

I, the Lord, Speak the truth. I declare what is right. Gather together and come, Assemble you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, Who pray to gods that cannot save.

Declare what is to be. Present it. Let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago? Who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord?

And there is no God apart from me, A righteous God and a Savior. There is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, All the ends of the earth, For I am God and there is no other.

By myself I have sworn, My mouth has uttered it in all integrity, A word that will not be revoked.

Before me every knee will bow. By me every tongue will swear.

[5:43] They will say of me, In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength. All who have raged against him Will come to him And be put to shame. But in the Lord, All the descendants of Israel Will be found righteous And will exalt.

Let's hear the preaching of God's word. Well, Israel has a two-fold problem And Isaiah points out to them God's answers to those two problems.

The first problem they have Is that they are going to be in captivity To Babylon. And God will provide A servant named Cyrus, His anointed, To set them free.

Their second problem, And their greatest problem, Is that they are in captivity to sin. And God will provide His suffering servant Of the Lord Who will die in the place of them And will set them free From sin and its damning power.

His name is Jesus. We're in the section Talking about Freedom from Babylon Through Cyrus, God's servant.

[7:14] And chapter 49 through 53 We'll come to Those chapters dealing with How He will set His people free From their greater Bondage of sin.

So that's where we're at. We're in this section Where Isaiah has foretold Babylon is going to Take you away into captivity And destroy your land, Your temple, Your capital city.

Four points In our text today. The first is God's complete sovereignty. One of the most important things About you according to God Is your view of Him.

That when I say to you God Or the Lord What comes into your mind? Who is He?

What is He like? Tell me about Him. And then tell me Your source of information. How did you come to know Him To be that way?

[8:16] What's going on in our passage Is that God is telling us About Himself. You notice that in Chapter 44 and verse 24. This is what the Lord says.

Your Redeemer. I'm the Lord. That's who I am. And now let me tell you What I do. And ten who's Follow. I am the Lord Who has made all things Who alone stretched out The heavens Who spread out the earth By myself Who foils the signs Of false prophets Who overthrows The learning of the wise Who carries out The words of His servants Who says of Jerusalem Who says of the To the watery deep Who says of Cyrus In other words The Bible Is not man's idea About God No, the Bible Is God's revelation About Himself In the Bible God comes to us And says I am God And God who does Thus and thus That is critical That we understand That God In the Bible Tells us Who He is What He's like And that's what He does here Before He introduces us To Cyrus His servant He's first introducing us To Himself Who raises up Cyrus So what is God Claiming for Himself In our text today?

Complete sovereignty Complete sovereignty Now a sovereign Is a king Who rules Who reigns And God is here Claiming to be The sovereign one Who rules And reigns Over all He says I made everything And therefore I rule Over everything He governs And controls All of His creatures In all their actions All their actions All of the time He determines Everything That ever happens In His entire universe If anything happens In history It happens Because God First planned it And then brought it To pass And that is true

Of Israel's history It's true Of U.S. history It's true Of world history It's true Of your history Nothing happens Unless God Plans it And brings it To pass That's what He's claiming In our text This morning Complete sovereignty And rule Over all things Now I would say That is a radically Different view Of history Than what is popular Today How do we know For sure That this is The case That God Indeed Is sovereign Over everything That happens Well because To prove it God has revealed Some of His plans To His servants The prophets Well ahead Of time He said To His servants This is my plan This is what I'm Going to do Way down here In the future And then

[11:46] He brings it To pass Exactly as His servants Announced What's he doing He's proving That he is the one Who is in control Of all Of history And that proves That he alone Is God He who rules Over all Is alone God Verse 26 I am the Lord Who carries Out the words Of his servants That's the prophets And fulfills The predictions Of his messengers I'm not only the one Who gives them The message To announce In advance And then stands By and watches No I Give them the message To announce And then I Carry out My word I fulfill The predictions That's a God Who is active In his universe Doing exactly What he said He would do Notice what He says

Happens I am the God Who says Who says Of Jerusalem It shall be Inhabited Who says Of the towns Of Judah They shall be Built Who says Of their ruins I will restore Them You see God's decreed Word determines History What he says The word That goes out Of his mouth Is what happens Nothing more Nothing less Now We need to Appreciate The timing Of this prophecy When he says Of Jerusalem It shall be Inhabited Jerusalem hadn't Even been Uninhabited yet Babylon coming And destroying Jerusalem And taking The people Back to Babylon That would Be a hundred Years from The time That Isaiah Is speaking That hadn't Even happened That's a long Way off Yet God Says not Only that Jerusalem would Be uninhabited But now he's Saying Even a hundred And seventy Years before That it's Going to Be Inhabited Though it Will be Desolate And without Inhabitants I'm going to Bring my People back Into the Land and Re-inhabit Jerusalem and The surrounding Towns that Were destroyed By Babylon So he's Predicting Even before Jerusalem and The temple And the Towns are Destroyed That they Will be Rebuilt Restored And inhabited A hundred And seventy Years before It happened Furthermore he Announces the Name of the King who Will do This Who will Who will Set free My people Down in Babylon and Bring them Back and Rebuild the City in Jerusalem Well his Name is Cyrus This is the First time He's mentioned In the Book of Isaiah And his Name is Given A hundred And seventy Years before He even Does this That would Be like Someone back In the Eighteen

Forties Telling Us about The Presidency Of Barack Obama Eighteen Forties That's Pretty Specific When you Can name The ruler That long In advance What is God doing He's Showing That when That comes To pass You will See I Am the God Who plans Whatever Happens Who announces It to my Prophets And then Brings it To pass Just as I said I am God I am In control Of all That I've Made Verse 28 I am The Lord Who says Of Cyrus He is My shepherd And he Will accomplish All that I please And he Cyrus Will say Of Jerusalem Let it Be rebuilt And he Will say Of the Temple Let its Foundation Be laid In chapter 45 And verse 13 He says I will Raise up Cyrus In my Righteousness And I Will make All his Way Straight He will Rebuild My City And set My Exiles Free Now that's An amazing Prediction Not just Because of The distance Before it Happened But No nation Had ever Returned To their Homeland After Exile But they Would Israel Would He says So And sure Enough Around 170 Years Later In 539 BC Cyrus Of Persia Conquered Babylon You can See it On the Cyrus Cylinder Over in The British Museum And he Became The Reigning World Ruler Of the Whole World Empire And he Sent The Exiled Jews Home To Their Homeland Never Happened Before It did Under Cyrus Not Just The Jews He Sent All The Captive Nations That Babylon Had Conquered And now He's In Charge Of All The Nations And he Sent Them Back To Their Homelands That's

[16:49] Different It was A whole New Foreign Policy Based On The Belief That Conquered People Are At Least As Like To Obey A Conquerer They Like As One That They Hate So Rather Than Just Keeping Them Under His Iron Thumb He Sends Them Back Home He Says And Let's Rebuild The Temples To Your Gods And He Sends Money With Them He Will Do All That I Have Purposed God Says That's Why He Did This That's Why A New Foreign Policy Came Into Persia To Set His People Free To Bring Them Back In The Land You Can Read It In Ezra In The First Year Of Cyrus King Of Persia In Order To Fulfill The Word Of The Lord The Lord Moved The Heart Of Cyrus King Of Persia To Make A Proclamation Throughout His Realm And The Proclamation Was For The Jews To Return Home To Jerusalem And Rebuild The City Ezra 1 1 1 4

So Before We're Introduced To Cyrus We're First Introduced To The Lord Who Raised Him Up And Enabled Him To Accomplish All That God Had Planned And Announced Now I Ask You Is This Your View Of God And Is This Your View Of History Because What You Think About God Is One Of The Most Important Things About You That He Is The Sovereign One Who Holds The King's Heart In His Hand And He Directs History That He Is Sovereign Overall Now That's The View That Continues In Chapter 45 Notice How It Begins This Is What The Lord Says To His Anointed To Cyrus Whose Right Hand I Take Hold Of To Subdue Nations Before Him To Strip Kings Of Their

Armor To Open Doors

Before Him So That Gates Will Not Be Shut I Will Go Before You And Will Level The Mountains I Will Break Down Gates Of Bronze And Cut Through Bars Of Iron I Will Give You The Treasures Of Darkness Riches Stored In Secret Places Cyrus You Will Be My Anointed Kings Were Anointed You Will Be My Anointed King To Fulfill All Of This For Me By The Way That's The Same Word That's Used Of Messiah Later The Anointed Of The Lord Now It's Used Of Cyrus Now There Are Always Two Things In History There Is The Seen And There Is The Unseen There Was What The World Saw The World Saw Cyrus And His Mighty Military!

The No One Was The World Saw That Was What Made The Headlines Of The News Of Cyrus Day What The World Did Not See Was God's Invisible Hand Holding Cyrus Right Hand Did You See That I Didn't Make That Up That's What God Says!

About Himself I Will Take Hold Of His Right Hand To Subdue Nations To Strip Kings And So On And I'll Go Before Him That's What You Didn't See You Didn't See God Going Before And Leveling Every Obstacle In His Path Things Like Mountains Carving His Way Through Gates Into Cities Right Into The Treasures Of Kingdoms And Giving Them Over To King Cyrus You Didn't See That You Just Saw Cyrus!

[20 : 36] Hand Governing And Controlling Strengthening Preparing The Way Enabling Every Single Victory That Cyrus Enjoyed In Other Words Cyrus Was Not Out Doing His Own Thing No God Was Controlling All Of The Actions Of All Of His Creatures All The Time That Included Cyrus Like A Teacher Would Do To A Student Who Learning To Write Cursive For The First Time And She Takes Hold Of The Right Hand Of A Right Handed Student And And Helps Her Write Her Name Cursive The Student Is Writing The Student Is Being Controlled By The Teacher That's What God Is Doing

Leading His Servant Into Victories Holding Cyrus Right Hand And There's A Purpose For All This Why Did God Raise Up Cyrus Why Did He Demolish All The Nations Well There's A Three Fold Purpose There's Always Purpose To What God Does He Doesn't Do Anything By Accident He Doesn't Do Anything Without Thinking About It There's Always The Plan From Eternity Past That He Is Carrying Out In Time And That Plan Has Many Different Aspects To It We See At Three Purposes Of God That Were Fulfilled By Raising Up Cyrus First First There Was The Purpose For Cyrus Himself Verse Three The Last Half So That You Cyrus May Know That I Am The Lord The God Of Israel Who Summons You By Name I'm Going To Do This I'm Going To Raise Up Cyrus Because I Want Cyrus To Know That I Alone In God Even The One Who Raised Him Up To Rule! Cyrus Didn't Volunteer To God To Be His Servant He Didn't Even Know That He Was Being God's Servant He Didn't See God's Hand Holding His Right Hand God Doesn't Require The Instrument To Even Know That He's Using Them You Didn't Even Acknowledge Me When I Came And Raised You Up But Nevertheless I Did Raise You Up Why Well Not Only So That You Might Come To Know Who I Am But For The Sake Of Israel My Chosen People Where Were They They're They're Going To Be Down In Babylon Held In Captivity And I Raised You Up To Go Down There And Set Them Free And Send Them Back Home Into The Promised Land To Rebuild Jerusalem In The Temple And

We Learned That All Of History Is Being Directed By God For The Good Of His People His Chosen Ones Even When It Appears Otherwise He Is Indeed Working All Things Together For Their Good God Uses Some Surprising Instruments Here He Uses A Pagan Polytheist A Persian King Named Cyrus To Be Israel's Savior From Babylonian Captivity Now Kings Of Judah Were Usually The Savors Judges From Israel Raised Up Were The Shepherds Of His People But The Shepherds Are Now Off In Captivity They're Out Of Commission Doesn't Mean God's Hands Are Tied Oh I Can't Raise Up A Savior For My People No He Raises Up A Persian Polytheist Named Cyrus An Idolator And Uses Him As An Instrument To Be The Savior Of His People From Babylon Physical Salvation Out Of Captivity There For

The Sake Of Jacob My Servant Israel My Chosen What An Unlikely Instrument And Indeed It Would Cause Trouble For Israel Themselves There Is Not Only A Purpose For Cyrus And For Israel There Is Also A Purpose For The World Verse!

[25 : 02] So That Here's Another Purpose! Clause Why Is God Raising Up From The Rising Of The Sun To The Place Where It Sets Men May Know There Is None Besides Me I Am The Lord And There Is No Other God Is On A Mission To Convince To to use Cyrus in that mission.

Because through this prediction about him and its perfect fulfillment, it will be seen by all who ever read the prophet of Isaiah that God controls history and he therefore alone is God.

I dare say that you and I have come to see that God is the only God because of reading Isaiah's prophecy. That's a fulfillment of this prophet, the reason he did this, so that from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun, all over the world, men might know that I alone am God.

Through Cyrus freeing the Jews, they would return to the land for the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem, not in Babylon. And there in the promised land, he would fulfill his work of redeeming people from every nation who would acknowledge that the God of Israel is the one and only true God.

God is on a mission to prove to the world that he alone is God. And at the return of this Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is God alone.

[26 : 45] So through Cyrus, God is demonstrating his absolute control over history. He is sovereign, not just over kings and nations, but notice verse seven.

He is king over much more. He reigns over all his creation in all their actions all the time. I form the light and create darkness.

I bring prosperity and create disaster. I, the Lord, do all these things. Some people don't mind a God who's in control of good things.

But when bad things happen, they seek to distance God from it. They try to rescue God from a bad reputation of somehow being involved in the nasty things that happen in his world.

Well, God didn't have anything to do with this drought, this tornado, this hurricane, this accident, this death, this cancer, this blood clot. And God says, you're absolutely wrong.

[27 : 53] Light, darkness, prosperity, disaster. I, the Lord, do all these things. Amen. He's sovereign over it all.

None of it would happen had he not planned it, had he not brought it into fulfillment. Without being the author of sin, he rules over every sin, making it perform his perfect will.

He completely controls it without ever getting his fingers somehow dirty by doing so. The greatest sin of all, what was it? It was the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

And God had his fingers all over that one. Acts chapter 4 tells us which God's power and will decided beforehand should happen.

What? The greatest sin of all. God's will and purpose decided beforehand should happen. Acts 2. That Jesus was handed over to be crucified by God's set purpose.

[29 : 02] He indeed is sovereign over all. Job didn't have a domesticated view of God so popular today.

A God that we can manage. A God that has all the sharp edges rounded off. One that fits well with our thoughts and desires. Job says, shall we receive good from the Lord and not trouble?

It's the same word as disaster in our text. I the Lord bring trouble. Job knew it. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

The Lord has done this. He's sovereign. Now the issue of this first point is this. Will we let God tell us what he is like or will we demand that he fits into our mental box of what we think he ought to be like?

God is saying I'm sovereign over it all. Will you bow before me as I am? Or will you create a false God by making him out to be what you think he ought to be?

[30 : 09] That is one of the most popular Christian idols today. It's God with the sharp corners rounded off.

Picking and choosing what attributes we like and rejecting those we don't. But we don't have that option. We either bow to the God the one and only God of the Bible as he presents himself to us or we bow before our imaginary God that we have created in our own imaginations.

He claims to be absolutely sovereign. I want to say what a comfort it is to know that God is God over my dark days as well as over my light days.

that he is not only the God over my shalom and prosperity and peace but he is the God over my trouble and my disasters.

He reigns. He rules. That's the God I need. What a precious God he is. What a comfort it would be to the Jews when all this started happening and down into Babylon they go.

[31 : 17] Oh yeah this was according to plan and there was another prophecy about after 70 years he is going to raise up a king from Persia named Cyrus who is going to set us free and we get to go

back home.

What a comfort to know that God controls the movements of kings hearts and the developments and current events future events all is well for Israel because their God is sovereign and the kingdoms of this world are but the instruments in his hands that he is moving to fulfill his good purpose for his people.

Children of God let us then by faith perceive the invisible hand behind all of our ways and all that happens in our world. Well that's the first point and we're about out of time.

Let me say this man has a serious problem with this sovereign God. And here's the problem God does things his own way.

That's the problem. That's man's problem with God. He's quite insistent even stubborn about that.

[32 : 36] He claims to know what is best and he does what he wants whether we like it or not. In fact he doesn't even ask us for advice.

And that brings us to the second point and we may not get much further but it's man's arrogant complaint. You see as Isaiah is announcing God's future plan what God is going to do through Cyrus for Israel.

Israel's not jumping up and down for joy and rejoicing and praising the Lord. Lord. No not at all. Rather they're complaining and carping about God's plan.

They didn't like the way God was doing things. They were critical of God and his ways and his plan. Maybe they didn't think it would work. I mean it's not the way you should do it.

They had a hard time swallowing the instrument that God was using. That's for sure. Cyrus a Gentile idolater as the hero, as the anointed of God, as the shepherd of Israel to lead us back home.

[33 : 45] Are you kidding? Why not a Jewish king? Why not a Jewish judge and savior? Why not work something supernatural like you did at the Red Sea?

Why would it just be through some Gentile king flexing his muscle and smashing all the nations of the world? Maybe they were even grumbling over the plan, even including their near extinction and going down into Babylon in the first place.

Whatever the particulars, they're complaining about God's plan. And God doesn't take it lightly.

Verse 9, woe, judgment, woe to him who quarrels with his maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground.

It's an ordinary piece of pottery. And so God is offended when men sit in judgment upon him as if he's answerable to us. Do you see the arrogance of it all?

When we are critical of God's plan, it assumes that we know more and know better than God. And it's also a challenge to his sovereignty, to his right, to do his will in his own way.

[34 : 57] He's king after all. And all the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing and he does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him, what have you done?

Daniel chapter 4. And so God has a question. Who are you to quarrel against your maker? And he talks about two relationships, the pot to the potter and the child to the parents.

Who are you to quarrel with your maker? Do you know who I am? I'm the creator with creator rights. The one who made all things has right to do with all that he's made, whatever he wants, whenever he wants.

That's the creator's rights. And so he asked, does the clay say to the potter, what are you making? Entering into judgment, critical analysis, God, what are you up to? Come on, you're answerable to me.

Does the pot do that of the potter? Does your work say, he has no hands? Does your work insult your intelligence? Like you, Israel, are doing to me?

[36 : 07] How are you ever going to bring that about? Questioning his plans and his abilities. You see, it's the fact that God is sovereign, leaves no room for complaining and criticizing him of the way he works.

He is who he is, and you are who you are. And that means you don't quarrel with your maker. Kids, you ever complain and quarrel with your parents?

Why do I have to do that? Because I'm your parent, and a parent has certain rights over their children. And so, God says, woe to him who says to his father, what have you begotten?

Or to his mother, what have you brought forth? Children aren't to complain of their parents rule. Neither is Israel to complain to the one who gave them birth and who formed them in the womb, as our text said.

In other words, Israel is here being rebuked. She is the complaining pot. She is the whining child. So, in verse 11, this is what the Lord says, the Holy One of Israel and its Maker.

[37 : 19] Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children? Or do you give me orders about the work of my hands? You need to know your place.

You're not critic and judge over me, but my children and pots under me. Remember who you are. Remember who you're complaining about. It is I, verse 12, it is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. my own hands stretched out the heavens.

I marshaled their starry hosts. You see what God is saying? I'm better qualified to be God than you are. I did this all by myself. I know the very best way to do things and I'm quite able to bring about your salvation in just the way I have planned.

In fact, that's just what I'm going to do even though you're carping as I do it. Verse 13, I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness. I will make all his ways straight.

[38 : 24] I will rebuild my city and will set my exiles free. Now, there's a lesson for us that when dark and difficult circumstances come, we are tempted to murmur and complain, are we not?

To think we have a better way, we deserve to have things done our way. God says, you're treating me as a puppet rather than as the sovereign God that I am.

God's sovereignty demands that we humbly take our place under him, trusting his wisdom, power, and love as the one who really does know what's best for us and who does direct us in the way that we should go.

We'll conclude with a third point because it's short. It's two verses. It's God's hidden surprises. You see, the ironic thing is that God's plan for his people, even as they are complaining about it, is far better than they ever could imagine.

For not only would they be saved by his plan, but through them, the Gentile nations would also be saved.

[39 : 41] What a plan! What a surprise! out of this very unsurprising, dismal looking plan. Verse 14 pictures a time in God's plan when not only will the Jews return to the Lord, but even Gentiles will be converted to Israel's God.

When, as Paul says, the unbelieving Jews would be cut out of the Israel of God, and believing Gentiles would be grafted into the Israel of God. For so long, Israel had been subject to the Gentile nations, but the Lord will reverse all of that, and he will cause the Gentile nations to come streaming up to Jerusalem.

What will be the attraction? What's the attraction of God's people? Well, it's that their God is the only God there is.

What do they say as they come? They're confessing, surely God is with you, and there is no other, there is no other God, and so the nations, Gentiles from all over the nations of the world will be casting their idols to the ground and coming to Israel saying, your God is the true God, and they come to worship him.

That is how this wonderful plan for Israel would spin out in the end. And at last, Israel would fulfill their calling to be a servant of God to the nations, to bring God's blessing of salvation, where?

[41 : 18] Genesis 12, 2, to all the nations, all the nations of the earth, Genesis 12, 3. And they would attract the nations to their one and only true God.

God. I would say that our very presence here today, worshiping the one true God of Israel, is a fulfillment of this prophecy. Here we are, Gentiles, worshiping Israel's God, former idolaters, who've turned to Israel's God from our idols to worship and serve the one true God and to wait for his son from heaven, even Jesus.

And such a glorious fulfillment of God's plan sparks wonder in the heart about this sovereign God. You remember when Paul was writing about God's sovereign way of working in the nations in Romans 9 through 11, how he would work among Israel and then among the Gentile nation.

At the end of that view of God's sovereignty, what does Paul do? He worships all the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. His ways are past finding out.

Isaiah is having such a moment here. Verse 15, as he considers God's plan and how broad and wonderful it is, he says in verse 15, truly you are a God who hides yourself.

[42:52] Oh, God and Savior of Israel, what you are doing is so often hidden from men. your ways are past finding out.

We only saw Cyrus, we didn't see your hand was behind it all. We only saw him mowing down the nations, we didn't see you clearing the way, cutting the way for him, strengthening him to do it. Oh, God, you are a God who hides yourself. Do you realize that in all that we see of God's works, we see just a tiny bit.

He is doing so much more with us than what we are aware. We see just the tip of the iceberg that's above water. We fail to see all that he's doing.

He's got purposes for us, for our neighbors, our children, the next generation, for the world. His people are at the center of what God is doing in the world.

[43:54] And we just see a tiny bit. Oh, you are a God who hides yourself. Who would have guessed that this people, wasting away down in Babylon, would have such a glorious future at the center of God's plan for the world that the nations would come rushing to them to join them in worshipping the one true God.

This backwater nation, that they would be the ones sought out because of their God. Being the true God. Here they are down in Babylon. They look like they're going under for the last time.

Their kings are gone, their temples gone, their capitals gone, their people are gone. It was over. But even when it seemed like God was nowhere to be found, he was right there working out his eternal plan right on time to the T, but using the most unlikely instruments, wasn't he?

A Gentile idolater, Cyrus, to be their savior from Babylon and to bring them back to the promised land where Messiah Jesus was to be born to be their savior from sin.

But again, to do it in the most unusual, hidden, unexpected way. who that was outside of Jerusalem that day looking on that thorn crowned Jesus of Nazareth streaked with blood would ever think that this is how God is saving his people with everlasting salvation.

[45:32] Oh, surely you are a God who hides yourself. God never would have seen glory in that sight. It looked like sure defeat, but what looked like sure defeat was salvation for a host of people from all the nations.

Surely you are a God who hides yourself. Oh, God and Savior of Israel. You confused saints, take heart.

You don't understand how this could be for your good. You don't see God anywhere on the field. You don't see his invisible hand. You don't feel it.

Take heart. Your sovereign God has it all under control. All of it. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform in a hidden way, in a way unseen by us.

He's up to good, good things for his people. He means to bless them. He means to do them good, plans to prosper them with everlasting salvation, to do them eternal good.

[46:43] He works in ways that are counter intuitive. His ways are so much higher than our ways that they look stupid to us. But you know who the stupid one is. It's just that we don't have wisdom deep enough, high enough to appreciate God's ways that are so much higher than our ways.

Faber says God is on the field when he is most invisible. In the battle, it looks like you're all alone. God is in the field when he is most invisible.

He hides himself so wondrously as though there were no God. There are times and places in our lives in this fallen world where to the natural eye it seems as if there is no God.

He's hiding himself that well. Oh God, you are a God who hides yourself. But you're also a God who reveals yourself and brings men to bow and worship before you.

You can't see him, but he's there, secretly yet powerfully guiding every step of your history, of world history, according to his plan. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take the clouds you so much dread, are rich in mercy and shall break in blessing on your head.

[48:14] Let's pray. We acknowledge that you have made us, O God, and not we ourselves, and therefore you have created rights over us.

And over many of us you have double rights because you've not only created us, you've also redeemed us. We're twice yours. We do confess that we have often judged you by feeble sense. We have taken our wisdom and have measured your ways and have been critical of you. Oh, teach us to find our place at your feet as the potter over us, the father who's formed us in the womb, made us your own.

Give us that sweet trust that says, father knows best, the potter makes no mistakes, my sovereign one is working all things together for my good.
and all that of grace, all of that undeserved. He's working all things for my eternal everlasting salvation, the highest good of all.

[49 : 31] And he took what appeared to be the most unlikely thing, a crucified Messiah, to take away all my sin, to make me right before God.

So, please, teach us to put our hands over our mouths and to worship, to praise you, and to realize that you are so high in your wisdom that our minds cannot fathom you, but we thank you that one day we will understand it better by and by, and all praise and glory and honor will come to you.
So, thank you for the privilege of being your people, bring others this day to put their faith in the one and true God. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.