

Our Infinite God

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Bible Text: Isaiah 41:21-29

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I'd like to invite you to look with me to Isaiah 41:21-29 which will be my text. I'd like to speak with you about "Our Infinite God." Here in verse 21, the Lord speaks,

21 Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22 Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. 24 Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you. 25 I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. 26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words. 27 The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 28 For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word. 29 Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.

If there was anybody that I could call as a testimony to what I've just read it would be the portion that Bob read for us from Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar, who in his day was one of the most powerful kings to ever live. He ruled with an iron fist and yet he was nothing before the Lord. Nothing but dust in the wind. I think also of Saul of Tarsus who thought himself to be something and yet was nothing and the Lord brought him low. One, Nebuchadnezzar, brought low in judgment; the other brought low in grace.

But either way, God is to be glorified and this is the God of the Bible. This is the God that all men are commanded to worship. You say, "Why don't they?" Well, you can't worship one you don't know. They don't have the heart. They don't have the mind. They don't have the ears to hear, the eyes to see and left in their blindness, they will always

carve out another image of a god. They will be idolaters by nature just like we are. If any of us worship God today in truth through the Lord Jesus Christ and his shed blood alone, it is because it has pleased God to be merciful to us. It has pleased God to grant us eyes to see not only our need but see Christ as the only answer, the only one who could ever make us accepted before God.

But what we have here in these verses that I've just read, verse 21-29, is a summons to a court hearing. I love the language of Scripture. I love the pictures that it sets forth. I believe that we read far too quickly the Scriptures when we do read but our biggest problem is that we read them far too infrequently. You know, if you had a textbook that you were studying in order to become a doctor or a lawyer, you would scrutinize, you would underscore, you would read, you would prepare and have that book read from cover to cover but isn't it interesting that with regard to the greatest book of all, many times we have to pick it up and dust it off and that whenever we feel like, "I need a little bit of a lift today. Let me go through here and find something that is going to help my spirits feel better." So we dial up a verse and, "Oh, there's a good one. Boy, that makes me feel better. Okay, thank you, Lord." Then we go on.

That's not worship. When we take this book and open it, you think about the number of authors that the Lord raised up to write this book, men just like we are, and inspired it and caused it to be not only written in the originals but preserved so that we can have a sure prophecy, a sure record. That we are not left to speculation of men with regard to who God is and I would encourage all of us, even myself, to take the time by God's grace and read this book and read it prayerfully, read it carefully, because it's the word that converts the soul. It's not my preaching. It's not my commentaries. It's not any man's commentary that converts a soul. It's the word and what a word it is. What a word it is.

But here, the Lord having comforted his people under their afflictions and persecutions. That's what we've been reading here, how the Lord would bring this people of Israel through great trial and tribulation and captivity and yet through it all preserve his own. Now, he turns to the very instruments that he will use or would use to chasten his people, the ungodly, the idolaters, and in his time calls them to task, calls them to account. There is no creature on this earth that is ever going to escape the judgment of the Lord. Do you realize that even though we may be the Lord's people that we will still stand before the judgment throne? It's not going to be a side room. When you read the book of Revelation, every creature that has ever lived in this world is going to stand before the judgment throne.

What is going to happen? Well, we know from reading in Matthew that the Lord is going to divide the sheep from the goats and if we are privileged by his grace to be among his sheep to where he says, "Enter thou into the kingdom which the Father hath prepared for thee," it will be all of grace. There won't be any one of his sheep that are there because of any work of righteousness which they have done. It will be according to his mercy. It will be according to Christ's work of righteousness that we will stand complete. We won't even open our mouth. We won't even have to open our mouth because Christ, the Advocate, will speak on our behalf.

Then there are all the others, a number which no man knows but I do know this: that every creature will be called into account and here the Lord does it in these verses and calls upon them. Notice in verse 21, "Produce your cause." It's like two teams, you've got the prosecuting team and you've got the defense. Here God is the prosecuting judge and he says, "It's your turn, you idolaters. Let's hear what you have to say. What evidence do you have for idolatry? What evidence do you have for trusting in your works before a holy God?" It would be good for men to think about this, to weigh it. You know, if you truly believe that it's your works that are going to justify you before a holy God, let's hear your reasons. Produce your cause. Make your best of it.

"Bring forth your strong reasons." You see "reasons" here in verse 21 is in italic. Strongest evidence to prove that your idolatry is worth anything. That your being an idolater is really the way to worship God and worthy of your adoration. Wouldn't you think if you spent your lifetime worshiping something that it ought to be something worthy? Worth adoration? There needs no more to show the absurdity of man's sin than to produce the reasons that are given in defense of it because it carries with them their own computation. In other words, the more a man speaks to defend himself or defend his works or defend his false worship, the more foolish he makes himself before a holy God.

But now, let's remember that we were at one time of that number and if we today can say that we worship God in truth, it had nothing to do with us being smarter, better educated or had a better upbringing. The Lord proves himself sovereign there. You can raise your children under the Gospel and they die and go to hell and be lost and the Lord will take a son or a daughter in some far-out idolaters' country where there has been absolutely no Gospel preached and turn a whole country upside down to bring that one under the Gospel and the Lord will save that one and pass by your children. That's the kind of judge he is. Let's be careful not even to make idolaters of the doctrines of grace with our children and make them feel that because they know the doctrine they're safe. There's nothing I fear more for our children.

But the Lord says, "Produce your cause." That's something that we ought to even ask our children, "Why do you think you're the Lord's? What makes you believe you are the Lord's? Just because you were raised in a Gospel church? Just because you identified in a profession?" I'll tell you, the Lord is going to test us in our greatest weaknesses because it's with the ones we love the most but unless the Lord does a work, they are lost. They are lost. That's true of us. We could sit under the hearing of the Gospel and be just as lost as a person over there bowing down to Buddha or worshiping a tree. That's what we are by nature, idolaters.

"Produce your cause." Now, we know that idols are nothing but that's what the Lord has to bring each of us to see because our greatest idol is what? It's ourselves. It's ourselves. We believe that we deserve better and that's why we get upset when things don't go our way. Yes, even become angry and suppress it, grit our teeth. "What's God doing?" Do you know why we reason that way in our unbelief? It's because we truly believe we're better than what we're getting and the Lord has to humble us again and again to show us

that our best thoughts, our best righteousnesses, our best works are nothing but filthy rags before him.

So this is what we see. God is the prosecuting judge and yet you see how he describes himself here in verse 21? If someone were to ask, "By what right do you call us to account?" Well, he's King of Jacob. Capital "K," the sovereign. He is the God of all flesh but he is particularly the God of his people and don't you think...you know, when you begin to put a standard down, you get people comparing themselves one with another, don't you think that these that he is calling into account would begin to reason, "Well, what's so special about Jacob? Why are you addressing us this way? What about Jacob?" And the Scripture says, "I'm Jacob's King."

And this is just how just and righteous God is because he won't even say, "But Jacob," unless it's according to his righteousness and according to his holiness. He will not lower his standard to say "even any sinner" just for mercy's sake. It's mercy and truth that meet together. Righteousness and peace that kiss one another and that through the Lord Jesus Christ. The King of Jacob is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. That's who is speaking here. "If any man stand, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." King of Jacob.

So as the King, as the Judge, he challenges every idolater to bring forth proofs of why they do what they do. As it says in verse 22, "Let them bring them forth." Here not so much their reasons but their gods. "Go ahead and bring your gods. I need some evidence here. Bring your very gods." And you know what an idol is, an idol is an idea. That's where it comes from. It's what you think is god. "So bring them. Don't just stand here with words. Let's have Exhibit A, Exhibit B, Exhibit C as to, I want to hear your gods speak," is what the Judge is saying. "Not you speaking for them." Well, you know right there we've got a problem because an idol can't speak. It has ears but can't hear. It has eyes but can't see. So much for so-called free will because it's nothing but an idol. It can't speak to the glory of Christ. It won't. It doesn't know him. That's what we are by nature.

But that's who God here calls and says, "Let them bring them forth. Let them come nigh. Let them appear in court. Let them speak for themselves. You worship them, I want to hear what they have." You can see the language that the Lord is using here and he gives them their assignment. "Let's start with the former things, what they be. Let's see what kind of glory they can claim for history for what has taken place." Has an idol ever produced anything? You can see how the Lord is reasoning here. He is the God of history. He is the one through whom all things unfold. I believe it's one of the greatest things that is left out of textbooks today. We truly in an atheistic society when you've got textbooks being written on history and God's name not even being mentioned. That's like not giving glory to the Author of all things.

That's who he is addressing here. "What did they ever do, what did idols every do in history, the former things, that are worthy of note? Just give me one. One thing that you can attribute to an idol." That's what God is declaring here. He says, "Show us what shall happen. Let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and

the know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come." We live in a day when people attribute certain things to chance or to luck. Those things don't even exist. Those are dumb idols. Things don't just happen. Anything that has ever taken place, it's because God has ordained it and that ought to be to our comfort. I may not know what he has purposed for me tomorrow but I can look back on my life from this point and trace every single thing good or bad according to what I may think but in reality there is no such thing because God ordained it all. I can look back and see his hand has thus led me.

Do you realize how much time we spend in depression because we're trying to change what God determined and ordered and it's done and it's past? You can't drive down the road looking through a rear view mirror. All the while we proclaim to be believers yet how much unbelief is in our hearts because we're trying to change something that will never be changed? We bow. You know, even that notion that somehow if this had happened or that had happened, maybe this wouldn't have happened or that wouldn't have happened is unbelief because there is no such thing with God. I don't want to attribute those things to chance or would have, could have, should have. It's done. It's done. So even there we have to be silent before a sovereign God to say, "Your will be done."

But that's what he's saying, "If you had anything to do with what took place, then tell me what's going to take place." Can anybody predict even a second from now what's going to happen? Not a one of us. That's why we're totally dependent upon the Lord. We find out what he has purposed for us and we seek him praying that he would give us hearts to accept everything he has ordained for us that we not be found as idolaters, once again, trying to maneuver and manipulate. That's what idolaters do. If something is not quite going the way they want, they go for that rabbit's foot, knock on wood, little things that people do today. I had one sit in the office the other day going like this, "Knock on wood." Tapping on their head. There's nothing there.

There's nothing there that is going to help determine even your best wisdom. Don't confide in your wisdom. Wisdom can be an idol. Don't confide in your works. Works is an idol. Don't even confide in graces. Graces can be an idol because you tend to think, "Well, this is how the Lord delivered me here, he's going to do it here." Not necessarily. What did the Lord teach his disciples to pray? "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." That is a constant prayer. However the Lord has led me to this point, I know not how he would be pleased to lead me but, "Lord, show me constantly my need."

And you can see how the Lord then calls them to account. Verse 23, "Shew the things that are to come hereafter." If you think you had anything to do with your history to this point, okay, let me hear you predict what's going to happen hereafter. I looked at these words because you notice they're in the plural, "Shew us what will happen." Verse 23, "that we may know that ye are gods." Who is "we, us"? Well, there is a Godhead. There is a Godhead: there's the Father, there is the Son and there is the Spirit. The Father purposes all things. The Spirit directs all things. But it's all to the honor and glory of the Son. This King of Jacob is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ to whom the Father has purposed to give all the glory and the Spirit does not speak of himself but gives the glory to Christ.

So it's them and us. You can see the language here. "Let them do if they can what we have done to this point in history in raising up a Jacob, preserving a Jacob, delivering a Jacob from Egypt." Some of the greatest so-called gods of the day were the gods of the Egyptians. There are still a bunch of people that want to go back to some Middle Eastern sort of religion today to get back to the gods of Egypt. "Let's find out what kind of strength and power they had." Boy, are they going down the wrong path. Just have to read the book of Exodus to see what God did to one of the most powerful kings that existed at the time, Pharaoh. He brought him low. You know that every plague, the ten plagues, was an attack against one of their gods in whom they confided. Why would you go back and try to raise up some power attributed to those gods who were nothing?

It's as if God is saying, "Let's see them inflict plagues such as God brought on Egypt." Or not just plagues but bestow blessings like he did on Israel. Do you realize that even today that little country of Israel has people scratching their heads? Powers? Enemies? They have forever purposed to destroy that little country off the face of the earth but the Lord said so long as they existed, even in their unbelief and blindness, so long as the moon shone and the sun rose, that people will exist. We're talking about a little strip of land that is 70 miles wide and 100 miles long. That's it and there is not one enemy that's been able to wipe them off the map yet.

Do you know what idolatry does? It attributes that to the United States. That's what so-called Christendom does. If we just keep supporting them, God's going to bless us and he's going to bless them. How foolish. They were in existence long before the United States ever came into existence. Who was watching them then? They were kept when every enemy was against them. There wasn't one that stood with them but God, to show his faithfulness to what he has purposed, has kept them whether you like it or not. Are they God-haters? Just as much as anybody in this society and yet no one is going to lay a hand to them because God has promised and he keeps his word. Even when men have hearts of unbelief and hate him, he's going to do his will. He's going to accomplish his purpose.

So you can see the challenge here. Notice in verse 24, again, the Lord is bringing this challenge to bring proofs of their so-called knowledge and power and you can see what is charged against these idols. He's saying let them disprove what he is asking for if they can but the reality is they are nothing even as we've already seen in Isaiah 40:17, "Take all nations together," if you look back there, "All nations," Isaiah 40:17, "before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." How prideful men are to think that they are something before a holy God. He says, "To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Men's notions of him aren't pleasing to him. They only condemn them all the more.

So what we see is their claims, men's claims of their so-called free will, their claims of so-called righteousness or works that they say men need to produce to satisfy a holy God, all of these are nothing but, it's a strong word, an abomination. It's an abomination. The more men insist on these things in contradiction to the one work of the Lord Jesus Christ,

the more they condemn themselves in their worship. He says, "ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you."

Do men have a choice? Absolutely, but left to themselves, what will they choose? They'll never choose to bow to this God. Left to themselves, they'll always choose between one idol or another, one false way or another, because that's the nature of the flesh. It wasn't us that chose Christ. He told his disciples that, "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you." Sure men have a choice but left to themselves it will always be wrong. It will always be in the way of the flesh and it will always lead to condemnation.

I know there are a lot that like to quote Joshua 24:15. Go back there and look with me. Again, here's where we need to slow down and read what the Scriptures say. Here when Joshua was addressing the people, in verse 14, he says, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth." That's the command. "And put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD." You cannot compromise the way of worship. You can't take a little bit of Cain and mix it with a little bit of Abel and come up with something that is going to be pleasing to God. It's one or the other and the only way that God has ever approved has been through the sacrifice, the bloody sacrifice. It's been that way from the beginning. In the Old Testament in types and pictures but then in the New Testament through the one exclusive work, unique, solitary work of the Lord Jesus Christ laying down his life, paying the sin debt and upon completion of his death, God the Father putting to the spiritual account of every one for whom he died that righteousness. The debt has been paid and there remains nothing but righteousness. That's God's way.

But he says here in verse 15 of Joshua 24, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve," now, read it carefully, "whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." When you in rebellion reject the way of God and that's what men do in their sin and depravity and lostness and they say, "I've got a choice," well, that's right, you do. It will be between the gods that your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. The only choice is really between one false god or another.

That's what you see people do when they run from the Gospel. It's like one old preacher said: the Gospel is like a bear that meets you in the middle of the road, you'll either bow or you'll spend the rest of your life running from him. And that's what some people do, they don't want to hear of a sovereign God. They do not want to hear of a singular work of the Lord Jesus Christ by which alone God justifies sinners. In their pride, they won't bow. They might even say like I've heard some say, "Well, 99.9% is the work of Christ but still that one tenth God expects of me." Really? Let's see you do that one tenth with perfection. You see, you're being called into court too right along with these other idolaters because you've got this little idol that you call the one tenth where God has done his part, now my little one tenth, I've got to do. Okay, go ahead and bring that idol in. Let it speak for you. Let's examine under the microscope that one tenth and see how perfect it

is. I don't want to be standing before a holy God even with a tenth of the garment being something that I have produced because it's an abomination, "an abomination is he that chooseth you." Even the choosing. If he did nothing with it but decide, "This is my god," and it's not the one, true and living God, even that is an abomination is what the Lord is saying.

But then in verses 25 down to the end of the chapter, it's like, "Okay, we've heard you. You haven't got any evidence?" Now God says, "Let me give you some proofs as to who I am as the one true God and the conclusion is there is none besides me." The Lord here gives his strong reasons. This is like a cross-examination. His strong reasons and the first thing we see about him as God, the infinite God, is that he is a God with irresistible power as you see in verse 25, "I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay." Historically, likely that Isaiah was writing concerning Cyrus that the Lord would raise up to defeat the Babylonian empire and cause the people of Israel to go back to the land and rebuild a temple but you know as well as I do in reading this where it says, "I have raised up one from the north," Cyrus was but a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Conqueror. The true Temple builder. The one who would come and by his work he would deliver his people. Certainly that's who he is.

Verse 26, "Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know?" Here we see not only an infinite God that shows his irresistible power but also his omniscience. His infallible omniscience. "Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know?" Do you realize that all the prophecies of Scripture have been fulfilled exactly as the Lord determined it would be even though written hundreds and thousands of years before? Thousands, all the way back at the fall when the Lord, even before Jacob existed, even before there was a seed given to Adam and Eve, he said there would be one that was born of the seed of a woman who would come and crush the head of the seed of the serpent. Did that happen? All of history was written for that time and all of history flows out from it exactly as the Lord said it should take place.

"Beforetime," as it says in verse 26, "that we may say, He is righteous?" Is he not the righteous Judge? Is he not the just Judge? Is he not the infallible God? Anything that man does is fallible but anything that God does is true and righteous altogether. "Yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words."

Then he sums it up, "The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings." The Lord is going to preserve his people. His salvation that he accomplished through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is a sure salvation. We're not any better than those that he condemns. In fact, we're all taken out of the same mass of clay. Is he not the potter to take of the same mass it says in Romans 9 and make some vessels of honor but at the same time make others vessels of dishonor? And who is going to say to the potter, "What doest thou?" Such arguments are futile but the Lord has his eye upon his Zion.

"The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them." That could be said positively or it could be said negatively. As accusers say, "Well, look at them. How are they any better?" And the Lord said, "They're mine," and they are the ones for whom Christ came and paid the debt and therefore they are justified. Or it could be said of them positively, "Behold, behold them." In other words, in a sense of, "Why me? Why them? Why should the Lord ever show mercy and grace to such as I am?"

But he says, "I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings." That's Christ, the good news that if he paid your debt, it's paid. Who makes you to differ? Nothing but God's grace and his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and his death.

And Isaiah said, "For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word." That's the end result of being in the flesh. We have no argument.

"Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion." Better that the Lord teach us now that we are nothing and teach us of our need of the Lord Jesus Christ than to find out in blind religiosity or blind worship of works that that is no savior at all, no ransom at all. I pray the Lord will bless this to our hearing.