

Our God is the One True God

The Lord based His promise on what He had done for His people. He made them and formed them. The Lord's activity toward His people has the tender care of a mother who has carried her child "*in the womb*" (Isaiah 44:2). With such care and tenderness invested in His people, God would also help His people. God's activity in shaping His people is a significant thought in Isaiah chapters 40 through 66. God's activity in the making and forming of His people will be placed in contrast to the way the idolaters formed and shaped their gods. But before God ridicules the foolishness of idolatry, He asserts His superiority. He has done more than make and shape His people, and He draws the attention of His people to all that He has done and would do.

In our First Reading for today, we hear these words of introduction: "*This is what the LORD, Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD of hosts, has said*" (Is. 44:6). God gives Himself a series of significant names that help us understand what He had done for His people. He is "*Israel's King*." He has administered the affairs of His people efficiently. No single human king who ever ruled over God's people was a perfect king. They all had faults, some of them serious faults. The Lord is the perfect, wise ruler of His people. He controls all the affairs of His people in a way that is best for them. He is also their "*Redeemer*." The word for redeem used here is a special word found repeatedly in the second part of Isaiah's prophecy. Altogether, it appears 24 times in chapters 40 through 66 and only once in the first 39 chapters. The word emphasises the activity of God. He and He alone must redeem His people after they have made themselves slaves by their own sin and rebellion. God would pay the price necessary to buy back His helpless people from the consequences of their own folly. Of course, the word points us ultimately to the payment God's own Son made in order to secure the release of all humanity from sin, death, and hell.

He is also "*the LORD of hosts*." LORD is the special name God revealed. He is the God of free and faithful grace, that is, the God of the covenant. He is the "I AM" who appeared to Moses. Additionally, He is all powerful in that He controls the hosts of heaven. The term, "*the LORD of hosts*," emphasises God's superiority, which God again underscores by the next words, "*I am the First and I am the Last*." Before the Israelites had become a nation, before Abraham, before Adam, God is God. He existed before the first words of Scripture: "*In the beginning...*" (Genesis 1:1). God did not emerge from the history of the created world. He is independent of creation because He called everything into existence by His powerful Word. These phrases encourage us to look ahead to the end of history too. When the last human is born, God will still be God. When the created world ceases to be, He will remain the first and last, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. These terms stand in sharp contrast to the idols created by human hands.

There is no God like the God of the Scriptures. The Lord says it so clearly, "*there is no God except Me*" (44:6). No one should have any doubt of that truth, but the sinful heart still resists that truth. To quell all doubts, God issues a challenge to those who trust in other gods and who have made idols. He challenges the false gods and those who believe in them to match His ability, specifically His power to care for His people in the past and to predict what will happen to them in the future. The God of the Scriptures is a God of action. He does things for the benefit of His people. Even more impressive, God foretells His actions before they take place. Can any god created by human thought claim to do that? No, such gods remain silent and mute.

God acts because of His faithful love for His people. They receive all the benefits of His action. When God claims superiority over the false gods, it is not only because He is a jealous God unwilling to share His glory with another. His superiority assures His faithful people that He can take care of them. God encourages His people not to fear and tremble as they face the difficulties of the Babylonian captivity or any other catastrophe or problem. When the flood of troubles roars as a mighty stream toward His people, God assures His people that He is the Rock that remains. The waters may swirl fiercely around it, but the Rock provides safety in the midst of life's surging troubles.

For the Jews, such comfort was necessary as they faced captivity. Surely, believers through the ages have not faced exactly the same difficulties as the Jews did in captivity. Nevertheless, God continues to be the Rock who provides safety, no matter what roaring streams of trouble rush toward us and future generations of God's people. There is no other Rock. We need to hear the encouragement too: "*Do not be terrified and do not be afraid!*" (44:8). Our confidence and hope are built on our King, the Lord Almighty, the Redeemer, the First and the Last. He is our Rock. Apart from Him no safety or redemption exists because apart from Him there is no god.