

The grace, mercy, and peace of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour, be yours this day! The title for today’s sermon is “Hidden vs. Revealed” and is based on the Old Testament reading, Isaiah chapter 45. Let us pray... . Amen.

The Hidden vs. the Revealed God. Which one should we spend our time trying to look at? One needs to be careful. There is much the Lord Almighty has revealed, but also there is much He has not revealed. Pastors and theologians of old gave Latin terms for both: the hidden God is the *Deus Absconditus*, and the revealed God is the *Deus Revelatus*.

The caution is this, to get focused on looking and searching for what God has not said, for what God has not revealed, one most often ends up ignoring or rejecting what God has clearly revealed in His Word contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. As already said, God has not revealed everything to us, but He has revealed what is necessary, namely, our salvation in Christ Jesus: Jesus' life in our place, His death for our sake, and His resurrection for our salvation. The disciple John records towards the end of his Gospel: “**Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;** <sup>31</sup> **but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**”(John 20:30-31) In Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, God reveals Himself. To look at Scripture is to see the *Deus Revelatus*, the revealed God; to look away from Scripture to try to find the *Deus Absconditus*, the hidden God, separates us from His Word.

Now, I might not always like what God has revealed--what God has clearly said in Scripture--and you too might not like or agree with it all either, but God's Word is still God’s Word. God’s ways are not our ways, nor should they be.

And so in that light, today’s text from Isaiah chapter 45 is interesting. Through Isaiah God identifies by name an anointed messiah, or as the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, it calls him, a christ who would deliver Israel from their exile in Babylon and return them to their promised land.

Recording the name of this anointed messiah is one thing, but some people get a little hung up on what Isaiah wrote in chapter 45. Their issue is Isaiah records Cyrus by name around 700 BC, that is about 150 years before Cyrus came on the scene, before he gained the devotion of the Persian tribes in 555 BC, or rebelled against the Medes in 550 BC, or when he took the city of Babylon in 539 BC. Some consider these verses, or even chapters of Isaiah as a later addition, written after the return from exile by a zealous pseudo-prophet. If that were the case, then the pseudo-prophet would know the text he was writing was false. He would be a liar and intentionally misrepresented God and God’s Word in order to deceive. The idea that naming of Cyrus is a later addition to the Book of Isaiah also denies the very fact of what the Lord

Almighty is doing. God Almighty is declaring His uniqueness over any other god by demonstrated His ability to see the future, by describing the events long before any human could ever speculate about it, and then governing the events to make His predictions come true. It also ignores the reality of what Peter says in his second letter: **“that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**(2 Peter 1:20-21)

All the prophecy and all the words recorded in the Bible was not written by some guy, or guys, who wanted to make up a nice story to try to fit history into their own story. All Scripture, from the beginning of the Book of Genesis to the end of the Book of Revelation, is God’s revealed Word through the mouth and hand of the prophet guided by the Holy Spirit. To deny Scripture, or to deny any part of Scripture to be God’s revealed Word is to deny the *Deus Revelatus*: the revealed God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and instead search for the *Deus Absconditus*.

So going back to today’s text, through Isaiah God explains what is going to happen, how He, the Lord Almighty is going to pick Cyrus, to subdue the nations before Cyrus, to destroy kings and open the bronze gates before Cyrus, and that God Himself would do all of it without Cyrus ever knowing God. God would exact His righteous judgment on nations through Cyrus, and God would deliver His chosen people, the children of Israel, through Cyrus. God foretells what is going to happen to the children of Israel long before it happens so they would be prepared for it, so they would not lose hope when the calamity and destruction occurred, and so they would recognize God work of deliverance and redemption. God explains how He is ultimately responsible for everything which is going to happen to them and what Cyrus will accomplish in his service.

But, God using Cyrus to accomplish His will is one thing, but why would God anoint him. Usually anointing was for kings of Israel, like Saul, David, and Solomon, people who knew God and His Word, not for a pagan idol worshipping king like Cyrus. Yet, God still treats him like one of His brightest and best. How God could choose someone for His service who only bowed down to other gods and only worshiped idols? How could God anoint one who never cared to worship Him? Ezra recorded that Cyrus acknowledged God, but it is never recorded that Cyrus did anything more than that. So, how could God anoint him and guide him for God’s glory? . . . Because God says so in His revealed Word. Also, because here God was setting up the greater. Isaiah’s words of prophecy are not so much about Cyrus as they are about God Almighty and His work to save and redeem His people.

What God was doing was He was setting up a second Exodus, not unlike the first from their slavery in Egypt, where the children of Israel and all people would be delivered from the hand who was oppressing them.

In today's reading, God proclaims again and again that He is in control, He is the only God, and that there are no other gods, not one. He is ultimately in control of everything. Isaiah explains in today's reading that God is the one who forms light and creates darkness, who makes well-being and creates calamity, that He does all things. Now, we need to be a little careful here and not take God's Word out of context. God is not saying He is the source or creator of evil. God does NOT say that here, nor does God say that anywhere else in Scripture; rather He says the opposite: "everything good comes from God"

Going back to Creation, God created darkness on the first day together when He formed light. After everything was created, God declared all His creation "very good." However, the world fell into sin and all creation turned evil. Now God may use something we consider evil or bad, such as reproof, corrections, punishments, discipline, and even judgments. "This does not make God the author of evil, nor the source of evil; the devil is, with the cooperation of perverse humanity. But in a permissive sense, God is responsible for allowing calamities. By saying that both good and evil proceed from God, He is reassuring people that there is no greater power at work in all creation. (Lessing, *Isaiah 40-55*, 384) God foresees everything that happens and governs everything according to His good pleasure.

Now, this Exodus that God was preparing was glimpsed at with the nation of Israel's deliverance and return from Babylon. But their oppressor remained. The oppressor that they struggled most with was not Egypt, or Babylon. Their oppressor is the same one which continues to oppress all people from all nations, including you and me. Today's text is part of the greater narrative of God's work to deliver all of humanity from our oppressor which is our slavery to violence, sin, and death. The deliverance from this oppressor is not given in parcel of land or through earthly freedom, it is not given through an anointed earthly king, but rather it only comes in one way: through Thee anointed King of Kings and Lord of Lords, through the Priest who offered Himself as the sacrifice for all our sin, that by His blood He could intercede for all who sin and deliver us from death and the devil. This Messiah is not Cyrus but Christ Jesus Himself. Jesus came and in our place died for our sins. For our Exodus, for our salvation He took our sins, our weakness, our shortcomings, failings, and all our guilt upon Himself, and paid for them all with His own blood as He hung and died for you and me on the cross. Hanging high above Jerusalem, God most fully revealed Himself to humanity: there was nothing hidden. Christ Jesus came to save sinners, you me, and all people. In His great love for you, He died for all your sins. Jesus death and resurrection releases you from the oppression sin, death, and the devil.

In Christ, God reveals what is most important: His perfect love for all of us sinners. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”**(*John 3:16-17*)

God reveals Himself, His grace, His forgiveness, and His deliverance most clearly through Christ Jesus and His work for you. God does not want anyone to perish, but wants all people to reach repentance and have eternal life in Christ. There is no other way to be saved; not by (*Marduk*), the god of the Babylonians, not by Allah, not by your works, not by your choices, not by how nice you are, and not by the size of your bank account. There is only one way to the Father and to eternal life. Jesus clearly says **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”**(*John 14:6*). Peter further proclaimed, **“For there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**(*Acts 4:12*) In Scripture, God reveal what is most important: your deliverance in Christ, accomplished by Christ, secured by His death and resurrection in your place. Here you have hope because all your sins are forgiven.

Too often, when we try to search for the hidden God, the *Deus Absconditus*, to try to understand what God has not revealed or said in His Word. The problem is apart from His revealed Word we only find the Father of Lies and Deception: Satan himself. Instead, rejoice in what God had clearly revealed, the *Deus Revelatus*, which proclaims the extent God was willing to go to deliver you from your sins, to forgive you, to save you, and to bring you to everlasting life. In Christ, the Word made flesh, God is revealed along with your salvation, free and forever. Amen.

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