

Series: Isaiah

Title: Remember, Return and Sing!

Text: Isaiah 44: 9-23

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### **Isaiah 44: 21: Remember these, O Jacob and Israel;....**

Israel is about to be taken captive by Babylon. His elect have no idea what they are about to encounter. They had strayed from God; but God never casts off his chosen, redeemed people. God will correct us, preserve us and bring us back into fellowship with himself.

As they go into Babylon, God says lay these words to heart. Will you lay these words to heart? Any who have begun to forsake the true and living God? Any elect, redeemed children whose sin and unbelief have caused you suffer the absence of God's fellowship and communion; these are God's words to you, "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel." In verse 8 the LORD said that there is no God beside him. He will end by reminding us of the great things he has done. And in between, God is preparing his people for strong temptations they are about to face.

Babylon is synonymous with false religion. When living amongst Babylonians you will be pressured to join them, to at least humor them and recognize their gods as the one true God. God shows what a fatal mistake it is to do so.

**Proposition:** The LORD God declares his utter contempt of idolatry. Then God reminds us of his mercy to those he has everlastingly loved.

### **I. GOD'S DEFINITION OF IDOLATRY**

God declares idolatry is vanity and unprofitable.

**Isaiah 44: 9: They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; And they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10: Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing?**

They—the man who makes it and the image—are both vanity. And the precious things he uses to dazzle the eye, to make his god appear more impressive and alluring, shall not profit. The god formed in man's vain imagination, like the images made to represent his god, is as weak and worthless as the sinner who makes it.

Human nature has not changed. Some still bow down to statues and images. But idolatry takes many other forms

- Covetousness in all forms is idolatry
- The worship of money
- The worship of power and prestige
- The worship of human opinion and applause
- The worship of human merit, of human will, of human works
- All are vanity and profitable for nothing.

**Isaiah 44: 11: Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.**

Can you imagine the base, utter shame—of having to stand before the Infinite Majesty of Heaven and Earth and confess that all along you have been worshipping yourself.

The Lord God says idolatry is the worship of man.

**Isaiah 44: 12: The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. 13: The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.**

God made man after his own image. The depraved heart makes his god after the image of man. And man puts his god up on a shelf so he does not interfere unless it suits the man.

The Lord shows idolatry is using the things of God to worship the works of man's hands.

**Isaiah 44: 14: He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*.**

- God made the earth man walks on.
- God made the tree yielding seed which the man plants.
- God sent the rain to nourish the tree.

Yet, the man uses the things of God to make a god for himself—that is the heart of idolatry.

Thomas Watson--"God made man out of the dust of the earth and man makes a god of the dust of the earth"

God shows that idolatry is absurd ignorance.

**Isaiah 44: 15: Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16: He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.**

This is man left to himself in sin. He feels natural cold. He feels natural hunger. He feels a natural need to bow down to a god. But this is the ignorance of man left in his sin. He uses the things of God to feed himself and is satisfied. He uses the things of God to kindle a fire then rejoices in "sparks he has kindled." And with "the residue thereof" he makes a god. With what's left over of his time, of his attention, of his money, he makes a god to soothe his conscious.

Idolatry is defiled reasoning

**Isaiah 44: 19: And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted**

**flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?**

Idolatry is a perverted appetite.

**Isaiah 44: 20: He feedeth on ashes:**

Consider what ashes are. They are all that is left of matter that has been consumed. They represent utter death and ruin.

Illustration: Think about what you would get from trying to eat a mouthful of ashes? They would dry up the moisture of the mouth, enter the nose and stop your ability to breathe.

No creature can live on ashes. I know of no plant that can grow in ashes. Ashes are the refuse of everything that is good.

The works of our hands are as incapable of giving life and sustain life as ashes are to a man. A life without God is as empty of all true satisfaction as the belly of a man feeding on ashes. But a natural man has never known true nourishment of spiritual things so he is content to feed on ashes.

Idolatry is due to the deceitful heart

**Isaiah 44: 20:...a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?***

A man without the life of God in his soul is unaware of his own emptiness. The eye is altogether darkened, that it cannot see; the ear heavy, that it cannot hear. His whole nature is perverted, his vision distorted, his power of judgment marred. He keeps feeding on that which will never satisfy

**Illustration:** Peanut chasing the squirrels. Keeps chasing though never caught one.

That is like what a great many sinners. The deceptive heart is stronger than his vain experience. A mouthful of ashes has never satisfied his hunger but he goes on feeding on ashes. "A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there not a lie in my right hand?* "

Here is a solemn word. Look back to verse 18.

**Isaiah 44: 18: They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand.**

What a solemn thought to consider: God will only suffer for so long with those who despise the truth of God.

Mark 4: 23: If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 24: And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25: For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

## II. TO YOU GOD HAS GIVEN EARS TO HEAR, THIS IS GOD'S WORD TO YOU. BEFORE HIS CHILDREN DEPARTED INTO THE LAND OF BABYLONIAN FALSEHOOD.

Remember!

**Isaiah 44: 21: Remember these, O Jacob and Israel;\_for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22: I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins**

Remember what you were and where you were when God found you—you were no different than a pagan idolater.

Isaiah 51: Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.

Remember God's particular, electing grace to you (Eph. 2:1-5).

Ephesians 2: 1: And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

This is the true and living God—

- He is Sovereign in Creation
- He is Sovereign in Providence
- He is Sovereign in Salvation

God who made our natural hunger for bread provides everything to feed that hunger. So it is with spiritual hunger. God makes his child hungry and thirsty for righteousness. And God provides Christ the Bread from heaven to satisfy—we need no other—he is the express image of God, "My Father giveth the true Bread from heaven."

In nature man gets his food through death. Seed falls to the ground and is broken and from that comes the fruit. So it is by Christ the Seed, laying down his life, broken under the justice of God, and risen again...he is the Food of his children. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins."

We must eat our food. We must receive Jesus into our hearts through faith. God creates the hunger for righteousness, he gives his child an infinite hunger and he can no longer be appeased by finite food. Christ only is the food of his soul—Christ is our feast of "milk and honey"; God says "hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

God says to his erring child: Remember, "Thou art my servant." Remember, "I have formed thee." Remember, "Thou shalt not be forgotten of me."

Return!

## **Isaiah 44: 22:..Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.**

Even when his redeemed child attempts to turn away, in shameful neglect, the God of glory speaks in power and successfully persuades his child to return! It must be so because God says "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins!"

- By the Blood of my Son!
- By the Power of my Grace!
- You belong to Me (I Cor. 6:19-20).
- God says "Return to me – Nothing stands in the way. I have forgiven your sins!"

Romans 8: 33: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth.

## Sing!

**Isaiah 44: 23: Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done *it*: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.**

Not only does God say, Remember what you were, and now whose you are; not only does God say "Return", but God says "Sing"

In heaven there shall be singing!

Luke 15: 7: I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Amongst all your brethren there shall be rejoice in the Lord!

- He Chose Us!
- He Redeemed Us!
- He Gave Us Life!
- He will not let us go.

The whole creation shall sing when God fully redeems our bodies and brings each child home to glory with him!

Romans 8: 19: For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20: For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, 21: Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22: For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23: And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

## **Application:**

You who are running from God

Hebrews 3: 15: While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Flee from idolatry. Wash your hands of it once and for all. If he has made you hear his Voice, you shall.

Brethren, as we come to his table, you who have been chosen, redeemed and called.

- Remember him!
- Return to him!
- Sing to him!

**for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.**

Amen!