

Part II, Lesson 11

Isaiah

The Lord is Salvation

Idols
Are
Worthless

Isaiah
44:9-20

*Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex
Curriculum*

Isaiah Part II, Lesson 11

Idols Are Worthless

Isaiah 44:9-20

One of the great problems of the Hebrew people was their worship of idols. There were many popular idols in those days, and they attracted the attention and worship of many people. Everyone has a god hunger built into them. We all have a vacant place in our hearts and minds that can only be satisfied by God. The people in Isaiah's day wanted a God that they could see. Read Isaiah 44:9-20.

The people of God have been forced slaves for many years. They are in a land where the Babylonians worshiped several gods. The gods of the Babylonians seemed to be strong and seemed to be blessing the people of Babylon. Their army was strong; their cities were great. Their economy was healthy. What more could they have asked? It must have seemed hopeless to the people of God.

And, if the people of Israel had been listening to their prophets at all, they would have known that their God had condemned them to this captivity. God didn't seem to be working very hard at getting them back home.

Isaiah told them that it was not wise to worship idols. Most don't think that Isaiah was trying to convince the Babylonians that they shouldn't trust idols. His message seems to be pointed to the Israelites to convince them that they should stay with the worship of the true God. This is not meant to suggest that all of God's people were ready to worship idols, probably many of them were resisting the idea, and Isaiah was wanting to encourage them.

Some want to worship idols because the idol is less frightening than a God who is above us and one we can't make or make over. At the center of the faith of the Hebrews, and also the faith of Christians, is the mandate, "You shall have no other gods before me." This is the first commandment as recorded in Exodus 20:3. These are the words of the living God. If you are truly Christian, there will be no one before God, living or dead. And obviously none of the gods who were the idols of the Babylonians were alive.

Our Scripture for today begins with, "All who make idols are nothing." The word nothing is a favorite word of Isaiah. He used it several times. It means, of course, nothing, but it also means emptiness and chaos. He has no respect whatsoever for anyone who would make an idol. These people have no value at all.

The makers of idols are blind, they are ignorant and in their future is shame. The person who uses his talent to create an idol is dealing with something that has no value. They can all stand together, but all their work will be destroyed. It is only human. Only the true God is above and beyond earth. Only the true God is eternal. He cannot rot or tarnish which is the fate of manufactured gods.

In verses 12-14 Isaiah outlines the construction of an idol in reverse. It's like he stood watching someone create an idol and thought back through the process that had brought the metal and wood to this point. He speaks of the person making the idol, and remarks on his getting hungry and thirsty from all his work.

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It takes hard work and skill to shape the metal covering (maybe gold or silver). The wooden shape is already created and the smith must hammer the metal into what will fit snugly on the wood. Before the smith can do his work, the carpenter must do his. The carpenter is responsible for creating the shape of the god. He used the tools available in that day to create out of the tree trunk the form of a good looking man. It is interesting that many, if not most, of the gods were shaped like humans. A few were shaped like animals, but most were seen as being no different than humans.

The tree must be carefully selected before the carpenter can carve the god out of it. So now Isaiah speaks of the person who cuts down the right kind of tree, maybe a Cedar, or a Cyprus or even an Oak. This god-maker probably has had his eye on that particular tree as it was growing in the forest. But even before the final selection can be done, someone had to plant the tree in the beginning.

Verses fifteen through twenty are about seeing how pointless the whole idea of idols is. The person who cuts down the tree will use some of it to make the god. However, he can't use all the wood for the idol. He cuts some up into logs to be used for cooking meals, and to put in the fireplace for warming the house. Then, he carves out the shape of the idol.

Isaiah asked, how could you burn part of the tree to ashes and worship the rest of it? He asks, how can you cook your food over part of the tree and ask the rest of the tree to save you? How can you warm your cold hands while part of the tree burns and call the rest of the tree your god?

Isaiah calls for reason. Some things are really obvious. If the god is not greater than you, if the god is someone you made with your own hands, if the god is the same as that with which you cook your bread and your lamb chop, if the god is just a stick, why would you bow down and worship it? You must, according to the prophet, ultimately say, this thing in my right hand (referring to the human-made god) is a lie.

Verse sixteen lists the order of use for the log. The first use for the tree was for cooking, then for warming cold hands and then for making a god. It could give us the thought that in our lives we put a lot of things before God. He comes after our job which provides food and our things, including an apartment or house, which provide us comfort.

One more thought. If your god is no greater than the gods of Babylon, you have a poor excuse for a god. The true God is greater than our imagination. He cannot be fully understood, or He would not be God.

*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

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Scripture Memory: "Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you." Isaiah 44:21

Lesson Goal: To help students see that the true God is beyond us and our ability to make Him or understand Him.

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Idols Are Worthless—Isaiah 44:9-20

Student Worksheet

Listen during the lesson for this information:

1. What is god hunger?
2. What is “at the center of the faith” of the Hebrews and Christians?
3. How were the “makers of idols” described?
4. In verses 12-14 Isaiah outlines the construction of an idol in _____.
5. Isaiah asked, how could you _____ part of the tree to ashes and _____ the rest of it? He asks, how can you _____ your food over part of the tree and ask the rest of the tree to _____ _____? How can you _____ your cold hands while part of the tree burns and call the rest of the tree your _____?
6. The true God is _____ than our imagination. He cannot be fully _____, or He would _____ be God.

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Scripture Memory: “Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you.” Isaiah 44:21

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.