

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 104

March 7, 2021



Rachel Hides Here Father's Idols by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo Cir 1628

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The Book of Isaiah

Message One-Hundred-Four

THE LORD HATES IDOLATRY

March 7, 2021

Daniel E. Woodhead

Isaiah 44:9–20

⁹They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity; and the things that they delight in shall not profit; and their own witnesses see not, nor know: that they may be put to shame. ¹⁰Who hath fashioned a god, or molten an image that is profitable for nothing? ¹¹Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; they shall fear, they shall be put to shame together.

¹²The smith maketh an axe, and worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. ¹³The carpenter stretcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. ¹⁴He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the holm-tree and the oak, and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir-tree, and the rain doth nourish it. ¹⁵Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth 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. ¹⁶He 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. ¹⁷And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

¹⁸They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. ¹⁹And none calleth to mind, 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? ²⁰He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand (ASV, 1901).

God, has previously mentioned His distaste for idolaters through Isaiah. Now He brings His full contempt and ridicule to them. He wants to warn the people of Israel and future generation about the strong temptation people will have to worship idols. For the Jews it was when they were captives in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. The Lord also wanted to warn and prevent them of their seeking to explore idolatry, which was the sin that did most easily beset the religious community in Babylon and after. Through Isaiah He gave them something to say to the people who were trying to influence them into idolatry. The question the cults and others outside of the truth ask is, *Where*

is your God? The proper response is to explain what history and facts remind us of what God has done and how He has manifested Himself to us so, we must then ask, *Where are your gods?* Finally, it is important to not fear the non-god of the Lord's enemies, and to witness our hope in the true God.

IDOLS DO NOT LIVE

Isaiah 44:9–11

⁹They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity; and the things that they delight in shall not profit; and their own witnesses see not, nor know: that they may be put to shame. ¹⁰Who hath fashioned a god, or molten an image that is profitable for nothing? ¹¹Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; they shall fear, they shall be put to shame together (ASV, 1901).

Immediately God through the prophet bluntly states His objection to the idols. The perpetrators of the idols gain nothing with this practice. This is because they are not genuine. At best they are a connection to the occult who also are nothing. The word for *nothing* occurs frequently in this part of Isaiah. It is in Hebrew *tōhû*, which connotes “elemental chaos.” A continuing theme in the myth of idolatry is the function of these non-gods as being something. But Isaiah asserts that far from finding order, those who choose the gods not only find chaos but they themselves become part of it. Which is the case if they dabble in it seriously and engage the occult. The Bible tells us that *Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14)*. The beings on which they lavish time and attention cannot do anything for them, and as a result their manufactured picture of the universe is complete fiction at best. They have created a lie and are part of that lie. At worst they are subject to being led into the demonic world and its wickedness.

The Lord though the prophet is saying that the non-gods' promoters and followers, by choosing to follow this departure from the true God, have blinded themselves and will one day be thrown into disgrace when their gods are unable to do anything at all for them. God says sarcastically that they have evidently chosen the gods *so that* they might be disgraced. To Isaiah it is hard to see why anyone would choose the helpless gods over the genuine.

Metal idols were first cast as molten metal and then finished off with a graving-tool. “*Who hath fashioned a god, or molten an image*” means “who has been so foolish as to do so, that is, to take so much trouble about a thing which cannot possibly profit any one?”

The Lord through Isaiah now explains what result there will be from the fact that idol manufacture is not profitable in any sense. All who are associated with the idols from their manufacture to those who trust in them will be ashamed because they will find that the idols are of no use in the time of need. Furthermore, the workmen themselves who have constructed the idols are mere men and therefore are unable to make anything that is greater than man. Only the true God can create that which is lesser than Himself, but the creature that partakes of flesh and blood cannot produce what is divine or greater than him. The idols, being under men and inferior to them, cannot help men.

Bringing imagery of a trial in front of God the senseless idol and their foolish human makers shall be witnesses against each other, and shall be involved in the same condemnation by Him and

confusion. Again, considering a Divine courtroom God says, "let them all be gathered together". He says this to allow them to testify to their claims in front of Him as to the power of making an object that should be worshipped instead of Him. He continues saying, "let them stand up." as in a court of justice, to defend their cause. Now He says the result will be that, "they shall fear, they shall be put to shame together." They shall be frightened when danger comes because then they will find that their idol-gods cannot defend them.

GOD'S SATIRE OF THE IDOL MAKERS

Isaiah 44:12-17

¹²The smith maketh an axe, and worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. ¹³The carpenter stretcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. ¹⁴He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the holm-tree and the oak, and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir-tree, and the rain doth nourish it. ¹⁵Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth 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. ¹⁶He 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. ¹⁷And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god (ASV, 1901).

Now the manufacturer of the expensive metal idol is satirized. He makes his cutting tool from iron fashions the metal overfire, beating it out and fashioning it with hammers with great care and diligence. But he is only a weak mortal man, not God. He shows his human condition as being hungry, thirsty and weary. Such a frail creature makes his expensive god and then worships the nonentity that cost him so much in time, money labor.

Now the Lord turns to the maker of a less expensive wooden idol to satirized him too. He carefully measures it, outlines it with chalk then forms it into the likeness of the beauty of a man. Interesting this detail ironically exposes the degraded idea of deity that pagans have. They can't conceive of any god who could rise no higher than the creature (Psalm 15:5-7). The only thing the idol was good for, was to remain sitting in the house as an ornament (Judges 17:4-5 Ezekiel 8:10-11). The idol is a mere work and not special if man is involved in the manner of its manufacture. Now the Lord begins to compare the materials used in these idols and how they are not Divine. The cedars, cypress, and the oak are trees were first planted by God Himself as he molded the creation and, stand in direct opposition to a tree planted by man. But even the one planted by man depends on God for its growth rain to make it grow. Continuing with the satire of the wood source God says that with the same tree, the pathetic idol-maker also makes a fire to cook his food and keep himself warm, in addition to fashioning the idol of which he will worship, and fall down before it (II Chronicles 25:14).

So, he uses the wood for cooking and heat half of it to make his “god,” with the other half and with silly folly, he bows down before it and worships it. Then he also prays to it and says, “deliver me, for thou art my god” (I Kings 18:26; Isaiah 45:20). The clear explanation is that the idolaters and idol-makers are judicially blinded and deceived mostly by false teachers. They do not know nor understand because God has shut the eyes of their minds so that they cannot comprehend (Isaiah 6:9-10; 29:10). When one turns from God strongly and for a lengthy time, he will experience a searing or disabling of the conscious so as to not see God (I Timothy 4:2). More succinctly He told us through the apostle Paul the outcome of this foolishness.

Romans 1:18–25

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. ²⁰For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: ²¹because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. ²²Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

²⁴Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: ²⁵for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (ASV, 1901)

Their ridiculously irrational practice of burning half of the wood for cooking food the other half making an idol, here called an abomination, is something intensely loathsome and utterly disgusting because it involves a hateful affront to God. The folly is finally highlighted and the stupidity of the worshiper satirized more sharply by putting the description of his own action directly from his lips in the first person, *Deliver me; for thou art my god.*

DECEPTION

Isaiah 44:18–20

¹⁸They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. ¹⁹And none calleth to mind, 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? ²⁰He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand (ASV, 1901).

The Lord here describes the deception that the idol maker and the worshipper do in relation to this practice. It is one in which they basically *shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand*. This is self-inflicted so as to believe the false. We are commanded to be aware of the false and not to follow the deceivers.

DECEPTION IN CHRISTIANITY

Matthew 24: 4-5

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many (KJV).

II John 7

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist (KJV).

II Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires (KJV).

II Peter 2:1-2

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false word (KJV).

I Timothy 1: 18-19

This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith (KJV).

Titus 2:1

But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine (KJV).

We are to Go out and Teach Regardless of the Environment!

Matthew 10: 16

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues (KJV).

II Timothy 3: 5

having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people (KJV).

KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUIT:

One of the tactics of anti-Christian, religious based cults is their ability to “spin” negative incidents to give the target plausible deniability of various biblical doctrines. Efforts are designed to destabilize and undermine a subject’s basic consciousness, reality awareness, worldview, emotional control, and defense mechanisms. The subject is guided to reinterpret his or her Christian history and adopt a new version of belief. This seemed to be especially true when it came to the leaders of most of these new religions who are most often characterized as “prophets and apostles”. The cults make a person re-evaluate the most central aspects of their Biblical Christian beliefs, with a focus on their negative experiences in the Church.

The foundation of any cult is to make it difficult for a target to leave. They convey hurdles to leaving which are either real or imagined downfalls of exiting the cult. The cult’s goal is to increase the “leaving cost” of real or imagined downfalls one will incur if they leave the cult. For example, you can say once you become a “Genuine Christian” (their version), you are one for life. If you stray from their version of “Christ”, you are doomed to a Lake of Fire. The “leaving cost” is easy to see: Leave us and you will suffer. Since most churches do not teach the Bible as authoritative, the cult’s missionaries have a wide range of targets to aim at to destabilize a believer. Therefore, when a local congregation or denomination removes the Bible as authoritative, they enable the cult to prevail and make it politically difficult for people to leave.

One unbiblical tactic is where the preacher tells the congregation what they expect to hear. By continually appealing to their ego, boosting their pride, and self-esteem, as well as simply reassuring them that they are correct in what they believe; they lull the listener into believing their version of the “correct” ideology to accept. This results in a “GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT INSTEAD OF WHAT THEY NEED” mantra. Another tactic is to appeal to people’s laziness and intellectual complacency. They do not wish to be challenged and want to live according to what is important to them. Some who call themselves “Christian” prefer intellectual laziness, and even hide from learning anything about the Bible. As long as they know nothing about the Scripture they are happy with the skewed view the cult church teaches them because it seems correct even though they are swayed away from the truth.

EXAMPLES OF ANTI-CHRISTIAN CULTIC BELIEFS

Liberalism:

Liberalism in theology is similar to liberalism in politics. Both want to secularize their respective societies to match the Humanist tenets. They put their faith in evolution, historical relativism,

progress through science, the “benevolent” state, and getting someone else’s money. To do this they must quiet the Bible fundamentalist and their revealed truth. The liberal refuses to believe the miracles of the Bible regardless of the evidence for them. Liberalism promotes Christianity without the Spirit or the power of God.

Modernism:

Modernism is a more subtle and increasingly popular idea to reframe the Bible in a way that makes Biblical writers present God according to their own superstitious world view. The most prominent is the “Bible contains the Word of God, but is not the World of God.” This means that man wrote it and therefore it has no authority. Modernists say “Glean the good stuff and don’t worry about the negative”. For example, the Israelite’s tribal god was Jehovah, who is no different from the Canaanite’s tribal gods such as Moloch, Baal and others. Of course, at the time of Christ, paganism abounded with a firm belief in what we call mythology. Relatively few pagans exist today that still worship Zeus, Ares and the other “titans”, however modern thinkers point to the fact that all deities of the day interacted with humans and produced half-god, half-human offspring. So, they say Jesus is no different, he is just another myth that hung on long after the others fell prey to modernism. they say people today no longer believe the old fairy tales and archaic religion of a mean God with a half-human son. Jesus was about love, not judgment so let’s just forget all the “righteousness stuff” and accept anything that makes others happy.

Secularism:

According to secularists, Christianity and God should be forced out of everyday life and be kept behind the closed doors of the home or church where it belongs. We see this attitude in our schools and now in our governments. Secularism puts pressure on people to keep religion private and out of the public eye. It is anti-evangelism and as a religion, has its own doctrine.

Universalism

Popular books like *The Shack* and other similar fictitious “Christian” books are promoting a theology called Universalism. Universalism basically says since Jesus died for everyone, everyone will be saved. The extreme brand of Universalism, called Ultimate Reconciliation, teaches that even Satan will be reconciled to God in the end. Universalism’s appeal is that God loves everyone. After all who doesn’t want a loving God? Forgiveness comes without repentance and the Christian relationship with God is without discipline or strength of character. If we all make it to heaven in the end, why bother living a Christian life? This doctrine is more insidious than it seems and is affecting many people today – even if they do not know it by its theological name.

Politicalism:

Politicalism seeks to enforce certain religious viewpoints through political power, either in a church or secular government. Those with this viewpoint cringe in fear when they hear a news story about Islamic fundamentalists wanting to force a country and its entire population to adopt Islamic religious law as the law of the land. Yet they will do the exact same thing in America. It is the idea that America is like Old Testament Israel and if we can just make enough Christian “laws”, God will bless us. The problem is that there are no Christian nations – only Christian people. If America was birthed with Christianity it was because she had Christians, not Christian

laws. When will the church learn that political power will not save a soul? Yet if we save a soul, we will probably get that person to follow in the moral lifestyle we promoted in the first place. The Church- that is individual Christians – will have to deal with these issues more and more in the coming days. If there ever was a time to “earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints,” it is today.

Americanism:

This subject can be much misunderstood. We love America and are blessed that the Lord saw fit to place us here. We have the most freedoms of any nation on earth but we must be cautious to not place Americanism before our Christianity. Jesus said that He is the way the truth and the life (John 14: 6). He did not say that any country on this earth is to replace Him. Many that claim Christ as their savior seem to think that our salvation comes from the United States of America. For example, they believe that since the first amendment to the US Constitution provides religious freedom, all religions are equal. That is not what it says, here is what it says:

Amendment 1 – Freedom of Religion Ratified 12/15/1791.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

CULTS THAT PROMOTE THEMSELVES AS GENUINE CHRISTIAN

Anti-Christian Cults stealthily attack Christianity from a doctrinal viewpoint. So, those cults that are nearest to Christianity are viewed as just another denomination with some differences but are not considered destructive. We are led into believing that it is inappropriate to speak out against them because it causes division in the Body. We simply do not know enough about these different groups to adequately prepare to speak out against them and prevent others from embracing these corrupt theologies. We fall for the lies because we do not know the truth of the Bible and therefore the false doctrines of the Christian Cults. When the gospel message is corrupted, the way of salvation is confused and people are in danger of being eternally lost. We must realize this and strive to warn of the dangers of the Christian Cult’s doctrine. The Christian Cults are Mormonism, Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Seventh-Day Adventist.

Next message CHRISTIAN CULTS AND FALSE TEACHERS

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