

We live in a time when it is difficult to tell who is telling the truth. In fact, our culture questions if truth exists at all. With personal bias affecting everything from scientific data to polls to the analysis of language, where can you turn to find the truth? In our passage for today, God was laying down the challenge to all comers to stand before Him and give a reason why they should be considered at all. Then He goes about proving His absolute trustworthiness.

First, God declares who He is, something we have already seen in previous chapters but reiterated here for comparison to all who would claim the right to define reality. ⁶ *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.* Isaiah 44:6

God repeatedly reminds Israel who He is. YHWH - the eternal God. The King of Israel - the real King that reigns over the kings of the earth (Psalm 89:27). It is His sovereign will that prevails. He declares that He is the only God. The gods of antiquity did not claim exclusivity. Worshiping several was preferred and not seen to be disloyal to any of them. It is this claim to be the only God that challenges us to accept or reject Him.

"The first and the last" is used the second of three times in Isaiah (41:4; 48:12) and repeated in Revelation as a description of God and of Jesus (Revelation 1:8; 22:13). There is no other God than this triune, eternal God.

⁷ *Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.*

Isaiah 44:7 Some people do proclaim they are a god, but in doing so they only show their spiritual ignorance. The God of verse six appointed a people group to declare His praise and transmit His words. Who can make that claim? Can they predict the future in detail? God is about to name the one He has chosen to return the future captives. Has anyone named a person yet to be born and told of the way they would be used by them to fulfill their purposes? No! And there never will be, for only the One who inhabits eternity already abides in the future (Isaiah 46:10).

If someone tells you they are God or a god, take them to this verse and let them answer God's challenge. Then let them know the real God will have mercy on their ignorance and forgive them if they will humble themselves and repent.

⁸ *Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.* Isaiah 44:8 Once again we have the command to "fear not, nor be afraid." This time the reason is that God has declared their return to the Promised Land. In the Law He

Commented [PW1]: Isaiah 41:4 (ESV)

⁴ Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Commented [PW2]: Isaiah 48:12 (ESV)

¹² "Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last.

Commented [PW3]: Revelation 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Commented [PW4]: Revelation 22:13 (ESV)

¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

promised that if their hearts turned back to Him that He would bring them back from captivity (Deuteronomy 30:1-3).

God alone can promise and with all certainty fulfill. He is the Rock, unchanging, steady, and sure. There is no other. All other so called gods are like shifting sand. You can't depend on their promises, because they don't have the power to fulfill them. What have they done compared to the God of the Bible? Where is the nation they have raised up and directed? What ocean have they parted? Can they walk on the waves of the sea? Can they command nature and it obeys (Mark 4:39) or can their words create matter (Genesis 1:3)?

Verses nine through seventeen declare the foolishness of the idol maker. In nine through eleven God explains why idols are not comparable to Him and can't predict the future. First, look at their makers. Can people make something better than themselves? While the people of Israel are God's witnesses and have God's Word, the witnesses of the idol maker don't see or know anything. When the idol fails to do anything advantageous, they will be ashamed of their ignorant efforts to make a god.

Verses twelve through seventeen describe the production process. The ironsmith and carpenter are merely men who try to make a god, but look how weak they are. Unlike God whose strength never fails and who never has a need outside Himself (Isaiah 40:28), the ironsmith gets tired and needs water to go on. The carpenter makes a god like he would make a house. His tools and materials are all created things that are used for other trivial things as well. Is there any logic in making a god out of something you use as fuel?

It is no different from the gods of this age. We tend to worship what our hands have made, the mere products of the hands of men, the latest gadget, the coolest car, the nicest home, or the entertainment box. **They all fail to meet the need of the human heart. They can distract us for a time, but we will eventually realize there is no real satisfaction in them.** They are not worthy of our devotion, of the commitment of our time. How we spend our time and money says a lot about what we idolize.

Recently, with the crisis in several lives within our congregation I have heard one often repeated theme. "How do people get through something like this without a relationship with Jesus?" An idol can't get you through tragedy. No idol will deliver you from judgment, or from the captivity of sin, or give us an eternal hope (Acts 4:12).

¹⁸ They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. Isaiah 44:18 The idol maker and idolater can't see what is right before their eyes. Why would God shut their eyes and hearts? Because that is their desire (Psalm 106:15).

The following verses are so contemporary and applicable to today. *¹⁹ No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also*

baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?"²⁰ He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isaiah 44:19-20 What happened to reason? Logic has been abandoned, and God says it is because He shut up their ability to see and understand. Of course that is what they desired, and God gave them up to their desire. (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) So when you point out that in accusing the Christian for having moral convictions, they are condemning themselves, as they are expressing a moral conviction. You can't say calling something a sin is a sin. That is self-contradictory.

On the one hand people will convict someone of a double murder when a fetus is killed along with his or her mother, and on the other they will condone abortion right up to the time of delivery. On the one hand they will insist global warming deniers are flat-earthers, and then predict a coming mini-ice age because of sun cycles. They cannot deliver themselves or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

When we believe what we want to believe in spite of the facts, in spite of logic and solid evidence, **when we manipulate the data or the polls to make the outcome conform to our predetermined conclusions, God shuts our eyes and hearts to the truth** (Romans 1:25-26). No one can make a person believe against their own will. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." There are truth seekers and there are idol makers (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). There are those who pray, "Lead me in the way of truth." And there are those who say, "Leave me alone, for I have *my* truth and don't want facts to interfere."

Here's the facts. Drug abuse will destroy your body. Immorality will destroy your home and your soul. Unforgiveness will make you bitter. What you sow you will reap. Pride guarantees a fall. Only Jesus can set you free. In Him alone is life. He is the only one to conquer death. You may not like the facts, but that doesn't make them untrue.

²¹ Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. Isaiah 44:21 God is reminding the nation of Judah in captivity that idolatry has failed them. They willingly accepted a lie. Now they are facing the reality of God's intervention and miraculous deliverance once again. If they are to be the servants of God and witnesses He has called them to be, they must constantly put themselves in remembrance of their Creator and His Word to them. They must continually remember that an idol is a lie that only deluded hearts will follow. God will not forget the Jews. He has a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:7).

Once again we see the parallel in our lives. Idolatry failed us. The gods we looked to, whether drugs, money, fame or position let us down. We found God's miraculous deliverance. If we are to be the servants of God and witnesses He has called us to be, we must constantly put ourselves in remembrance of our Creator and His Word to us.

We must continually remember that an idol is a lie that only deluded hearts will follow. God will not forget us. He has a covenant with us through the precious blood of Jesus (Luke 22:20). He empowers us with His Spirit.

What a privilege we have! **Do you realize how blessed you are that Jesus would choose you, make His home in you (John 14:23), and have His life manifest through you (2 Corinthians 4:11)?** That's over the top incredible. Why would we ever debate when it comes to flesh or Spirit? We are blessed beyond measure. Compromise should be utterly repulsive to us. We should be so in love with Jesus for all the love He has shown to us that we thank Him unceasingly for each time He shines through us. Every enticement of an idol should cause us to laugh at the pathetic, little promises of temporal satisfaction, for the King of kings and Lord of eternity is living in us!

²² I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you. Isaiah 44:22 Their idolatrous past was forgiven. Their sins were blotted out. A new start was waiting for them if they would return to God. He redeemed them. Like Boaz paid for the property of Ruth's dead husband and took her for wife, so God was now claiming to be Judah's kinsman redeemer (Ruth 4:9-10). That is a Jewish application of the Hebrew word "redeemed." He would take them as His own. He was offering to be responsible to care for them and the land.

God has blotted out our sins and become one of us to be the kinsman redeemer of mankind and to prepare a bride for Jesus. He has taken back claim to the earth which Adam lost (Genesis 1:28) and accepted those who come to Him by faith as His bride. The price for our redemption was precious, so steep that no one else could pay it. It was His own sinless life. That is how precious you are to Him. If He was so patient and merciful with Israel, won't He be the same with you. He calls to us, "Return to me, for I have redeemed you."

²³ Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and will be glorified in Israel. Isaiah 44:23 Time for that new song that was mentioned in a previous passage (42:10). Believer, this is the foreshadowing of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus has redeemed us, taken us for His bride. He has paid our sin debt, and He promises to care for us. He is determined to be glorified in creation (Romans 8:20-21) and that includes us! You should be shouting a joyful "Hallelujah!"

²⁴ Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, Isaiah 44:24 YHWH, your kinsman redeemer is the One who formed you in the womb. He designed you for His purposes. He fashioned you just like He intended. He is the creator of all things (a declaration of Jesus and YHWH being one). He stretched out the heavens in the vastness of the space He created all by Himself (Genesis 1:1). He spread out the earth by Himself. All the wonder we see in creation

Commented [PW5]: Romans 8:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope
²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Commented [PW6]: Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

came from His hand. The Bible declares that the LORD did it and that Jesus did it (Hebrews 1:2). That is because they are one.

²⁵ who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, Isaiah 44:25 God frustrates the signs of liars. The false prophets that arise are eventually shut down by God. God orchestrates events to show the diviners to be fools. They might guess right a time or two, but God will see that the truth seeking honest heart will see the foolishness of diviners. God will show the knowledge of the wise men to be foolish. On the one hand you have the lying spiritual seers and on the other the practical wisdom of men. Both will be shown to be foolish compared to the wisdom and knowledge of God.

²⁶ who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins'; Isaiah 44:26 But when God's prophets speak, He brings it to pass (1Samuel 3:19). At the time of captivity it seemed impossible to expect the ruins of Judah to be inhabited. Yet, it came to pass to show the Jews and the world that God alone knows the future.

²⁷ who says to the deep, 'Be dry; I will dry up your rivers'; Isaiah 44:27 God is again alluding to the miraculous deliverance from Egypt, but also hinting at the way Cyrus would defeat Babylon through a dry river bed. Our amazing God seems to follow patterns and yet never does the same thing twice. This verse is also a spiritual picture of God removing the obstacles for the return to the Promised Land and every obstacle that would keep us from heaven.

²⁸ who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'" Isaiah 44:28 God, for the first time, names the king He would use to bring it to pass before he was even born. The edict of Cyrus returned the Jews to Jerusalem and laid the foundation of the Temple. It is so very specific. The foundation was laid in the time of Cyrus (Ezra 3:11) but the rest of the Temple was not finished until a following king's reign (Ezra 6:14-15). In doing so God proved to Judah, the world, and to us today that He knows all things. The future is in His hands. Your future is in His hands. You can trust Him.

What a revelation of the grace of God! Every time we fall captive because our hearts are deluded by an idol, we suffer the consequences. But our kinsman Redeemer will clear the obstacles in our hearts and minds for us to return to Him. He is our Promised Land. He will deliver us again and again, every time we are willing to return to Him. But beware, lest like many in the Jewish nation, that when He comes, we are too focused on our latest idol to return to Him.

Questions

Commented [PW7]: Hebrews 1:2 (ESV)

² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Commented [PW8]: 1 Samuel 3:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

- 1 What are two readings of verse 6?
- 2 What is God's challenge to those who claim to be divine?
- 3 What was the old promise?
- 4 What is wrong with an idol?
- 5 Why would God keep idolaters from seeing and understanding?
- 6 Why are some people so illogical?
- 7 Apply verse 21 to us.
- 8 What do we have to be grateful for?
- 9 What does the kinsman redeemer mean to us?
- 10 How does God deal with false prophets? Why?
- 11 How was verse 28 precisely fulfilled?