

Is. 44:6 ¶ "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.

God is the Lord, the King of Israel..., Redeemer, the Lord of hosts..., the first and...the last; And...no God exists besides Him. Once one considers that Jehovah is all of the above and more, how could anything manmade be His equal? Therefore, idolatry is futility. This will be the subject of verses 6-23.

Before moving to verse 7, we need to look more closely at the phrase, "*I am the first and I am the last,*" a phrase that confirms that Jehovah is both the beginning and end of all things, including all of history from eternity past through eternity future. There are three places in Isaiah where Jehovah describes Himself as such: Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; and 48:12. It is interesting that this same phrase is used three times in the book of Revelation: Revelation 1:17; 2:8; and 22:13. Because God is the beginning and the end of all things, and sees all of eternity past through eternity future at one time, He can predict upcoming events with pinpoint accuracy. No idol can even come close to doing such a thing, the very point that Jehovah is making in these verses.

Note: Just because God knows all things that will occur (before they occur) does not mean that He causes all things that occur. If He caused all things, He would be the author of sin, and who in his or her right mind would accuse Him of such.

Is. 44:7 'And who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place.

God can *proclaim and declare* what the future holds with precision and exactness. No idol can do such a thing.

Is. 44:8 'Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.'"

The Jewish nation could bear witness to the fact that Jehovah had fulfilled His short-term prophecies. Therefore, He, being the only *God*, could be trusted to fulfill His future prophecies as well. Because *God* has always been (and will always be) in control, the nation was not to *tremble or be afraid*.

Is. 44:9 Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

Isaiah adds a touch of humor in these next few verses as he makes light of idols and those who manufacture and worship them. He begins by stating that idols are *futile* and *of no profit*; yet *Those who fashion a graven image*, along with the *witnesses* of such things, cannot understand their uselessness. The *witnesses* could be the worshipers or the idols themselves, but either way *they will be put to shame*.

Is. 44:10 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit?

There is *no profit* in fashioning a false *god* or casting an *idol*. Why? They cannot explain the past, define the present, nor predict the future. Neither can they provide protection from impending danger.

Is. 44:11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame.

The craftsmen who fashion the idols, along with their associates who worship such things, will all...be put to shame.

Is. 44:12 ¶ The man shapes iron into a cutting tool, and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers, and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary.

The makers of idols are mere men who are dependent on food and *water* for their existence. The point here is that God is not dependent upon anything; in fact, He is the provider of that which sustains the craftsman. Therefore, He is greater than the idols produced by mere men.

Is. 44:13 Another shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes, and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house.

The shape of the idol is determined by the thought and mind of *man*. Therefore, if God is the Creator of all things, including mankind, how can *man* generate anything that would appear superior, or even equal to, the Creator? One only has to observe a sunrise or sunset to know that nothing generated by *man* can compare with the beauty generated by God.

Is. 44:14 Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak, and raises it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow.

The very wood used to manufacture an idol is totally dependent upon God, who provides *the rain* necessary for its growth. Therefore, why should a portion of a tree ever be deified?

Is. 44:15 Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image, and falls down before it.

When considering that a portion of a tree is used to manufacture an idol and the remainder is burned for common purposes, one must conclude that idols are worthless.

Is. 44:16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast, and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire."

Again, we see, along with verse 15, that a portion of the tree used to manufacture an idol is burned merely for common purposes.

Is. 44:17 But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for thou art my god."

The portion of the tree used to produce the idol is worshipped while the remainder is burned in the fire. Why then should the idol be worshipped, having been made from the same as that which is consumed? Isaiah has made his point, confirming that no such "*god*" could bring deliverance.

Is. 44:18 ¶ They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.

If the fundamental law of thought is the law of non-contradiction, why then can't he who builds and fashions the idol see the contradiction in worshipping a part of a tree whose remainder is cast into the fire. The answer is simple. Once man makes the choice to wallow in disobedience, God gives him the ability to fulfill his passions by blinding him to the lie which he views as the truth (read Romans 1:28, Ephesians 4:18, and 2Thessalonians 2:11-12 for example). In other words, he is incapable of discerning contradictions because truth has taken a backseat to falsehood and deception. This, basically, is where we live in our present postmodern era, for truth has been exchanged for that which is inundated with contradiction and inconsistencies.

Is. 44:19 And no one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire, and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat it. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!"

Taking verse 18 and tying it in with verse 19, God will see to it that the *knowledge* and *understanding* necessary to discern the contradiction associated with idolatry is unavailable to the idolater. The word "*recalls*" is interesting in that it means "returns to his heart." Have you ever wondered how idolaters would respond if they honestly assessed their infatuation with the things made by man's hands? They would repent and admit that idolatry is useless. Why then do they refuse to examine their motives before a holy God? Their morality dictates their theology; and they had rather live a lie than submit to the truth that, in their hearts, they know to be right. The prophet Jeremiah stated that destruction had come upon the land "*Because no man lays it to heart*" (Jeremiah 12:11). God has given every man (and woman) a consciousness of Himself, a consciousness that they must suppress before entering into the worship of that which is improper (Romans 1:18-23). Therefore, every worshipper of false deities enters life knowing, in his heart, that a God of truth exists and is worth their time. Therefore, they *are without excuse* (Romans 1:19-20).

Is. 44:20 He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

The *deceived heart* of the idolater cannot discern the *lie* that has been bought as the truth.

Is. 44:21 ¶ "Remember these things, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.

Israel was to *Remember* that Jehovah had *formed* His *servant* (the nation of Israel in this case) and would not forget her. She would *not be forgotten* due to God's covenants with the nation. Those who worshipped idols were forgotten and betrayed on a consistent basis, for no idol ever delivered anyone from anything.

Is. 44:22 "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."

The God who had formed Israel would do away with the nation's sins. This will come about as a result of the nation repenting at the end of the Tribulation and accepting Jesus as Messiah.

Is. 44:23 Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the Lord has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.

When *Israel* (every Jew alive at the end of the Tribulation) is *redeemed*, confirming God's faithfulness to all He has promised, all creation will rejoice. These events will display God's *glory* in that He will have proven Himself to be faithful, holy, righteous, and completely trustworthy—something no idol could ever begin to duplicate or accomplish.

Is. 44:24 ¶ Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, "I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself, And spreading out the earth all alone,

In verses 24-28, Jehovah has Isaiah give additional input pertaining to Cyrus, a king who would reign in Persia approximately 150 years after this prophecy. Isaiah began dealing with *Cyrus* without naming him in Isaiah 41:1-7, but will call him by name in Isaiah 44:28. It would be *Cyrus* who would defeat the Babylonians and allow the Jews to return to their homeland in 536 BC. Note the detail of these prophecies relating to this Persian ruler. Only an all powerful, all knowing God could fulfill such fine-tuned statements relating to Israel's future.

Based on Isaiah 44:24, Jehovah alone is Israel's *Redeemer... , who formed the nation from the womb... , the maker of all things*. He stretched out the heavens without anyone's assistance, and He is also credited with *spreading out the earth all alone* (Isaiah 40:12 ties in well here). Again, we see that God is greater than any idol, even any Babylonian idol—needing no one's assistance.

Is. 44:25 Causing the omens of boasters to fail, Making fools out of diviners, Causing wise men to draw back, And turning their knowledge into foolishness,

God causes *the omens of boasters to fail* and makes *fools out of diviners*. To state it differently, He brings to naught the words of the false prophets within the realm of the occult. God also frustrates the words of the *wise men* of the king of Babylon.

Is. 44:26 Confirming the word of His servant, And performing the purpose of His messengers. It is I who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise up her ruins again.

God confirms *the word of His* prophets. Therefore, whatever Isaiah speaks in regard to *Cyrus* will come to fruition; in fact, *Cyrus* would decree that *Jerusalem* should be rebuilt and *inhabited*. This was fulfilled in the book of *Ezra*.

Is. 44:27 "It is I who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make your rivers dry.

Jehovah removed all hindrances when the Jews were delivered from Egypt in the book of *Exodus*. He will do the same when *Cyrus* allows the Jews to return to *Jerusalem*.

Is. 44:28 "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"

Cyrus is named for the first time in this verse and is described as God's *shepherd*. He was God's *shepherd* in that his decree allowed *Israel* to return to her homeland as God had prophesied in *Jeremiah* 25:11. His decree also allowed both the city of *Jerusalem* and *the temple* to be rebuilt, both of which had been destroyed by *Nebuchadnezzar* of *Babylon* in 586 BC. The phrase, "*Your foundation will be laid*" (*Isaiah* 44:28), is interesting in that even though *Cyrus* issued the decree sanctioning the rebuilding of the entire temple (read *Ezra* 1:2), the temple in its entirety was not

completed during his tenure as leader of the Persian Empire (read Ezra 3:10-4:5). Another fact to note is that in Ezra 1:1-2, Cyrus' decree seems to concern the temple alone, but Isaiah 44:28 confirms that it included the rebuilding of *Jerusalem* as well. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived from 37 AD to around 100 AD, recorded that *Cyrus* issued this decree as a result of the writings of Isaiah:

1. IN the first year of the reign of Cyrus, which was the seventieth from the day that our people were removed out of their own land into Babylon, God commiserated the captivity and calamity of these poor people, according as he had foretold to them by Jeremiah the prophet, before the destruction of the city, that after they had served Nebuchadnezzar and his posterity, and after they had undergone that servitude seventy years, he would restore them again to the land of their fathers, and they should build their temple, and enjoy their ancient prosperity. And these things God did afford them; for he stirred up the mind of Cyrus, and made him write this throughout all Asia: "Thus saith Cyrus the king: Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea."

2. This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: "My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple." This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written; so he called for the most eminent Jews that were in Babylon, and said to them, that he gave them leave to go back to their own country, and to rebuild their city Jerusalem, and the temple of God, for that he would be their assistant, and that he would write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices.

I am sure that you and I would pay much attention to a document that mentioned our name and position of authority years before we came on the scene. Can you imagine what Cyrus must have sensed as he read these verses in Isaiah?

