

THIS IS CRAZY

By Becky Reeder

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 44:12-20

The one who works with iron makes a sharp tool for cutting, working over a fire. He makes it by beating it with his strong arm. He becomes hungry and has no strength. He drinks no water and becomes tired. [13] One works with wood, he marks it, and draws on it with a red marker. He makes it smooth and makes it like a man, like the beauty of a man, so that it may sit in a house. [14] He cuts down cedar trees, and takes a cypress or an oak, and lets it grow strong among the trees. He plants a fir tree, and the rain makes it grow. [15] Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself. He makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it. He makes an object of worship and bows down in front of it. [16] He burns half of it in the fire. Over this half he eats meat as he makes it ready, and is filled. He also warms himself and says, "O, I am warm. I see the fire." [17] But he makes the rest of it into a god, his object of worship. He bows down in front of it and worships. He prays to it and says, "Bring me out of my trouble, for you are my god."

[18] They do not know, and they do not understand. For the Lord has covered their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot understand. [19] And no one remembers about it, or knows or understands enough to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire, and have baked bread over the fire. I have cooked the meat over a fire and have eaten it. Should I make the rest of it into an object the Lord hates? Should I bow down in front of a block of wood?" [20] He eats ashes! A false idea in his heart has led him the wrong way. And he cannot save himself or say, "Is not what I have here in my right hand a lie?"

OBSERVATION

The Message paraphrase of this passage closes with three words— "this is crazy." Who in his right mind would take the gifts and talents God has given him, and put his trust in the gift over the Giver? Sounds silly. Sounds absurd. Sounds a little familiar.

Our world admires the brilliant workaholic who strives to get ahead and admonishes the modern-day maker for the work of his hands that brings him recognition and good fortune. It's tricky. It all seems good, until it's not. If we're not careful, a false idea enters our hearts and leads us the wrong way.

In the few verses preceding this passage, Isaiah reminds us that the idols we make are worthless. But he gets a little more personal when he calls out the idol maker as nothing, ignorant and blind (Isaiah 44:9). I don't know about you, but I don't want to be a know-nothing, ignorant, blind man trying to make my way. Life is too hard.

The deception that entered the idol-making hearts and minds of the craftsmen in Isaiah is not much different than the false ideas we open our minds to today. An idol is anything we put before God. It's anything we trust over God. It's anything we take joy in above God. It could be anything—careers, hobbies, relationships, entertainment, sports, social media or even confidence in our own strength over God's. Creating and worshipping modern-day idols is like eating ashes. They will not strengthen us, and they will not save our souls.

OBEDIENCE

God didn't create us to treasure anything or anyone but Him. Intertwined throughout Isaiah 44 are reminders for living life as God's redeemed children where our joy rests in serving him.

- *Stop and think (v. 19)*. Isaiah faults the craftsmen for neglecting to stop and question their actions. We too should question how it is we are using the gifts and resources God has provided. Ask God to reveal to you if there are idols separating you from His truth and love.
- *Feed on God's Word (v. 20)*. Isaiah compares idol worship to feeding on ashes. It is a bad idea. Not only do ashes lack nourishment, they are toxic! We should nourish and strengthen our souls by studying God's Word and filling our hearts and minds with His wisdom, not our own.
- *You cannot save yourself (v. 20)*. Don't be misled, there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. The woodworker turned from God to idol worship and could no longer see the Truth. God calls us to complete dependence on Him. He is the only one worthy of our worship and praise.
- *Remember you are not forgotten (vv. 21-22)*. Isaiah calls out to God's chosen people, asking them to "return to Me, for I have redeemed you." Is your trust in Him or is it in the work of your hands?
- *Sing for joy over all the Lord has done (v. 23)*. Isaiah's message on idol worship closes with a reminder to sing for joy over all the Lord has done. Not what *we* have done, but what *He* has done. His glory is displayed when we serve and worship Him.

PRAYER

Dear God, we praise Your name; for You are the Maker of all things and do not forget Your children. Forgive us when we make idols out of Your precious gifts and put our trust in anything but You. Open our eyes to false ideas and help us to recognize the deception of modern-day idols. Guide us in Your strength, for we cannot save ourselves. In Your precious name, Jesus, amen.