

A DECEIVED HEART FEEDING ON ASHES  
Isaiah 44

Intro: Two things stand out in this passage as being incredible:

- 1) That the Lord should have to plead with His people to trust Him;
  - 2) That He would have to defend Himself against idols.
- But we find Him doing both of these things in this chapter.

The chapter has three parts:

- 1) Vv. 1-8.
- 2) Vv. 9-20.
- 3) Vv. 21-28.

What a chapter this is on the depravity of the human heart--even the hearts of those who belong to the Lord. Just as the capacity to sin remains, so do the other characteristics of our hearts which have been rooted in sin.

But there is another factor which is evident here. It is this:  
If having received the light, we turn to darkness, the darkness is greater than if we had never had the light!

The first and last parts give us God's appeal to His people. The middle part shows how the Lord portrays the folly of idolatry.

The contrast that the Lord draws between His people and those given to idolatry, brings out the special blessings which the people of God have and makes anyone wonder how the people of God could forsake what they have in the Lord for the nothingness of those who worship idols. They are best described in this chapter in v. 20.

The people of God are seen here, as elsewhere in Isaiah, in the light of what the Lord is.

I. THE LORD'S FIRST APPEAL (Isa. 44:1-8).

A. Who His people are (vv. 1, 2).

1. Jacob and Israel.
2. Jacob and Jesurun.

Jesurun appears four times in Scripture: Deut. 32:15; 33:5, 26; and here. Its meaning is not clear, but, comparing it with the first (Jacob and Israel), it is a substitute for Israel, and thus a favorable term. It seems to be related to a word which means to be made straight, or to be approved. Either or both would fit into the passage.

B. What God had done for them (vv. 1, 2).

1. He had chosen them (vv. 1b, 2b).

2. He had formed them, and made them (v. 2a).

C. What they had become: the servant of the Lord (vv. 1, 2).

In addition to the meaning of "servant," this meant that they belonged to the Lord.

D. What the Lord would do for them (vv. 2-5).

It is all summed up in the words in v. 2, "which will help thee."

In vv. 3-5 note that God's promises also have to do with their children and children's children. What a price people pay when they turn away from the Lord!

Finally, in this appeal, the Lord spoke of Himself.

E. What they had in the Lord (vv. 6-8).

We see here:

- 1) The uniqueness of the Lord.
- 2) The sovereignty of the Lord over the future, announcing ahead of time what shall be.

## II. THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY (Isa. 44:9-20).

Think of the Lord of heaven and earth having to defend Himself against idols with the very people He had chosen and redeemed, and whom He was helping.

Men will go to great lengths to make idols, not realizing that the same wood that they use to make the idols, regardless of how it may be adorned, is the same wood that they use to heat their homes and to cook their food. See vv. 14-19.

The conclusion, by divine revelation: v. 20. Note the four things that are stated in this verse. Spiritually it is like a person who would set a plate of ashes on his table to eat instead of food.

It is only by the word of the Lord that we can be awakened to see the folly of what we do when we have turned away from the Lord and from His Word.

## III. THE SECOND APPEAL (Isa. 44:21-28).

Some of the same things that the Lord had mentioned in the

first appeal are mentioned again here. Thus, we have the word, "Remember." Note:

- 1) Jacob and Israel.
- 2) My servant — 2x.
- 3) God had formed them. See also v. 24.

They had forgotten the Lord, but He had not forgotten them. See v. 21b.

In addition, a special emphasis is given here to what God had done with their sins—a work which idols could never do! See v. 22.

Then follows a review of what the Lord had done, and what He would do:

- 1) All creation rejoiced over the works of the Lord (v. 23).
- 2) The Lord is the Creator (v. 24).
- 3) The Lord is sovereign in:
  - a) Overruling false teachers and leaders (v. 25).
  - b) Standing behind His Word — in three respects:
    - In His promises to His people (v. 26).
    - In doing what needs to be done for the deliverance of His people (v. 27).
    - In making even unregenerate kings do His will (v. 28).

Concl: Our problem is not actual idolatry, but remember that an idol is anything that takes the place of the Lord in our lives, anything that occupies our time and our interests.

Paul defined idolatry in terms of covetousness for the Colossians in Col. 3:5, and identified it as one of our members—that which belongs to us!

Every day we are faced with the question of where our trust will be. New trials force this decision upon us again. The Israelites got into trouble with their contact with the world, the nations which they did not drive out.

What better answer to our need could be found than in the words of Paul in Col. 3:1-4? This was the burden of Isaiah, too. What folly it was for the children of Israel to turn from an all-sufficient God, to ashes. May God enable us to say with Joshua of old, ". . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15b).