

ISAIAH 44

“NOT FORGOTTEN!”

In this chapter, the Lord (through the mouth of the prophet) encourages His people with assurances of great blessings that He had in store for them when they would return from their Babylonian captivity (verses 1-8). But those blessings were only a prophetic foretaste of much greater spiritual favors and privileges which the Gospel-Church – the Lord’s spiritual Israel – would partake of in the days of the Messiah. Our Lord Jesus became Jehovah’s Servant, took our name and nature upon Himself, and entered into covenant-engagements to stand in our place. He was made sin for us, even though He “knew no sin,” so that “we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6, 11). Here we read of the blessings that are promised to Christ and His people. And what a blessing it is to see the barren wilderness-state of poor perishing souls turned into something flourishing and fruitful – in and through their union with Jesus! When the Father remembers His everlasting covenant with His dear Son, and pours out His Spirit from on high; then all those blessings follow, which are here described.

Two lessons were to be learned by God’s people during their time of captivity in Babylon: the all-sufficiency of Jehovah, and the absurdity of idols. Each of these themes is dealt with in the glowing sentences of this chapter. The all-sufficiency of God was the subject of verses 6-8, and the absurdity of idols is the center of attention in verses 9-20. It is this latter theme that we shall study now. In these verses, we are conducted into the idol-factories of the day. And as we begin our exploration, we are forewarned that we shall find the manufacturers vain, and the work of their hands unprofitable. Even if the whole assembly of them were to stand together in one solid body, they would all be put to utter confusion and shame. So with this caution in mind, we enter the workshop where a molten image is being made from glowing metal, beneath the heavy blows of the hammer that is wielded by the strong arm of the blacksmith (verse 12). Surely the product of such strength should be strong to help! But see how the blacksmith himself is tired and thirsty after a few hours of work! How, then, is he able to produce an object which can help other men in the extremity of their needs? An idol cannot give strength, when its own manufacturer is so easily exhausted. Next, we are led into a factory of wooden idols (verse 13). Here a carpenter is at work – stretching out a measuring-line, drawing a pattern upon a block of timber, and shaping the figure of a man. The floor is littered with crisp shavings, the product of the carpenter’s labor is covered with sawdust, and the

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord encourages His people with assurances of blessings when they return from captivity, which were a foretaste of greater Gospel-blessings – verses 1-8
- ❖ The folly of idol-makers and idol-worshippers is exposed – verses 9-20
- ❖ The assurances of great blessings are confirmed – verses 21-28

very same idol that is supposed to fill its worshipers with awful dread is being handled very roughly in its process of manufacture. Lastly, we follow an ordinary individual into the forest (verse 14). He levels a sturdy tree, part of which is sawn into logs and stacked up for firewood; and the remainder of it is fashioned into an idol, before which the man bows himself. How graphically are these contrasts portrayed! We can hear the chuckle of delight as the man warms his hands or roasts his food by the crackling logs; and immediately afterwards, we behold him in prayer – pleading with the remainder of the tree trunk to deliver him, since he is worshipping it as a god.

Why do people act with such inconceivable folly? There is a hunger in every human being for something Divine. Man is not satisfied to merely eat his food or warm himself at his fire; he must go forth in search of the beautiful, the sublime, the harmony of sweet colors and sounds, the discovery of truth, and the presence of God. This hunger is also inevitable, but alas! This appetite for spiritual things may become sadly perverted, causing the hungry soul to feed on ashes instead of real food. And it is sad to say that idolatry is not a thing of the ancient past; for people still worship idols, even today – although not always at the feet of shrines and statutes. And in every case, the substitutes for God – with which men try to satisfy themselves – are as incapable of satisfying the heart as ashes are of supporting physical life. With what, then, should we satisfy the appetite of our souls? With the true Bread of Life! The same God Who made your soul to hunger for bread has also made the Bread of Life to satisfy that hunger. And He has also provided Beauty for our enjoyment, Truth for our thoughts, and Love for our hearts; He has gathered all these – and much more! – into His one Gift, Jesus Christ.

Verses 21-28 provide further assurances to God's people of the favors that He would show them in their return from Babylonian exile. Not the least remarkable of these promises to the Jews of old was the prediction – given a century before the birth of the Persian King Cyrus – that he would be the Lord's instrument who would proclaim liberty to the Jewish exiles, and who would make a decree for the rebuilding of the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem. These merciful blessings were promised to the repentant Jews; and in a spiritual sense, these same blessings are still applicable today to all who repent of their sins, and believe on Christ alone as their Savior from Satan's slavery! He has given us words of assurance that we are not forgotten! He has blotted out our sins like a cloud; upon Calvary's summit, all the sins of all Christ's people were forever put away. He has loved us from eternity past, and He has bought us with a great price; so how could He ever forget us now? Let us pray for grace that He may never be forgotten by us!

Lord, we thank You for not merely covering over our sins, but for actually blotting them out forever! Amen.

