



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## The LORD Almighty--His Grace (Isaiah 44:9-23)

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### **Weekly Bible Study Schedule**

- **Tuesday, April 24, 7 AM in HHR #5**  
**-Breakfast Provided**
- **Tuesday, April 24, 8:30 PM in Room #301**  
**(Speaker Pro-Tem's office)**

We only have a few more Bible Studies remaining in the 2012 Legislative Session. I know schedules are getting busier as the end is near, but be sure to discipline your time. Make sure you have the time to study, meditate, pray and fellowship. We will continue both of our studies each Tuesday--7am in Hearing Room #5 and 8:30pm in Room #301 (Rep. Shane Schoeller's office). Even if you have not attended in the past weeks, come on in and join us.

### INTRODUCTION

Dateline--Wichita: Police arrested a 22 year old man at an airport hotel after he tried to pass two \$16 bills.

Dateline--Location Unknown: A man went into a drug store, pulled a gun, announced a robbery, and pulled a Hefty-bag face mask over his head--and realized that he'd forgotten to cut eye holes in the mask.

Dateline--Seattle: A man attempted to siphon gasoline from a motor home parked on a Seattle street. Police arrived at the scene to find an ill man curled up next to a motor home near spilled sewage. A police spokesman said that the man admitted to trying to steal gasoline and plugged his hose into the motor home's sewage tank by mistake. The owner of the vehicle declined to press charges, saying that it was the best laugh he'd ever had.

There are a number of such stories concerning some of the things criminals have done that are quite funny. But none are quite as laughable as the people described by Isaiah in chapter 44.

*Isaiah 44:9-20 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. 10Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no*

*profit? 11Behold, 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. 12The 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. 13Another 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. 14Surely 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. 15Then 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. 16Half 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." 17But 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 you are my god." 18They 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. 19No 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!" 20He 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?"*

### I. THE ABSOLUTE FOOLISHNESS OF MAN (44:9-20)

Through the prophet Isaiah, Yahweh God defines those who form and fashion graven images and idols. In verse 9, He states "are all of them futile." He is not just referencing the idols for that has already been seen in God's challenges to them in Isaiah 41:7, 25-29 and 42:17. Rather He is

### CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, ROOM #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4<sup>TH</sup>FLOOR CAFETERIA

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indicting those who make and follow after the idols. These people are the ones declared by God to be futile.

The Hebrew word translated “futile” (NASB) or “nothing” (NIV) is the same word used in Genesis 1:2, “The earth was formless...” It embraces the meaning of empty, without form, chaos and nothingness.

This is pictured in Psalm 115:4-8, *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. Those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them.* In essence, those who make and worship the idols are nothing just like the objects they worship.

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**WHAT COMES INTO OUR MINDS WHEN WE THINK ABOUT  
GOD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT US.**

—A.W. TOZER

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Now, why does God say such things about these people? Look at the ridiculous actions and thoughts in today’s passage:

- v11-12--The gods are fashioned and made by other people. The idols cannot even make themselves. The craftsman also shows his own mortality by getting tired and weary while he makes the idol.
- v13-14--No one wants an ugly god, so the craftsman has to make it beautiful since it cannot do so on its own. He wants the god to be made of quality materials; so to insure this, he plants the tree himself and then the rain and nature causes it to grow. In other words, the only true God causes the tree to grow since He is sovereign over His creation, but the craftsman fails to recognize this. E.J. Young writes, “If God had not provided the material of creation, man the creature would be at a loss to know what to use in constructing his idols.”<sup>1</sup>
- v15-17--The craftsman then takes half of the tree to use for fire to keep warm and cook his food (a proper use for the wood) and the other half he uses to make a beautiful image to bow down to, worship and seeks its help (an improper use of wood). When the tree was used properly it was of great service to the craftsman, but when used improperly, it became a great stumbling block.
- v18-20--The craftsman just doesn’t get it. He is blinded, deceived, and have no understanding, therefore, he does not see the

inconsistencies or irrational thoughts. There is no one with an ounce of logic to stand up and ask “Hey, we threw that piece in the furnace, why are we worshipping this piece and asking for its help?”

The Apostle Paul reflects on these people, as well.

*Romans 1:20-25 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

Now before we stand here in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and look back at these backwoods, ignorant, ancient civilizations and chuckle at their foolishness, let’s look closer to home first. How many do you know (and maybe you can include yourself) who think:

- “I have such a great portfolio. My investments are solid and stable. They will be my security in the time of need” (if I ever come to that point).
- “I have such a great job. It will never be lost and it will provide that which I need and want.”
- “I have such a great family. It will always be there for me and will never end or pass away.”
- “I have so many connections and prestige. My friends are always there and I will never be in lack of friendship or opportunities.”

What people (and possibly you) have, though, is nothing more than a “house of cards” that can easily be blown over. But yet, many are looking to these types of things for their protection, sustenance, happiness, peace and contentment. People have foolishly created these idols, and others--power,

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health, abilities, hobbies--but none will deliver what is expected for they are nothing. These things are things they have created out of other created things. And in the days of trials, those who trust in them will be like them and they will be called “foolish.”

Maybe it is not so funny when we begin to examine our own lives and take notice of the things we have built and have put in a position above or before Yahweh God.

### II. THE AMAZING GRACE OF GOD (44:21-22)

But, Yahweh God is a good God full of amazing grace.

*Isaiah 44:21-23 "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. 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." 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.*

He is good for even though His people have forgotten Him and turned to other gods, He has not forgotten His people (v21). This truth is later emphasized:

*Isaiah 49:14-15 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me." Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.*

God formed Israel as a nation and it is His servant. He is not going to forget that which He formed. Even today, as children of God whom He has redeemed, called and brought together as His people, it may seem that He has forgotten us. One may wonder why he or she is continuing to suffer and struggle while he or she is constantly and passionately calling out to God in prayer. But friend, remember this promise (in spite of your feelings or circumstances): He has not forgotten you. In fact, He has sustained you up to this point and will continue to sustain you through to the end. We may

feel forgotten, but don't rely on your feelings; instead, remember His promise.

He is good for He will forgive sins (v22). Sin, which has separated people from God, will no longer be a hindrance for God's people to return to Him. God commanded them to "Return to Me" because there is no longer a wall of separation. Just like the wind that removes the clouds from the sky, so God does to the sins of His people.

In this passage, He wants to make doubly sure that His people hear Him and take notice. Verse 22 is written using the Hebrew poetic device of parallelism to show emphasis. Just like one today may highlight a word or thought by italicizing it or by putting it in ALL CAPS, the Hebrews used repetition. In other words, God threw out a big neon light saying "Look at this—this is very important—I have wiped away your rebellions (a past, completed action) like thick clouds; and I have wiped away your sins like a cloud or mist." This is truly good news.

*Isaiah 43:25 I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.*

*Psalms 32:1-2 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!*

*Colossians 2:13-14 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

*Romans 5:8-9 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

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He is good for His forgiveness is provided as He redeems His children (22b-23). It is impossible for man to provide the ransom to escape his bondage; there is no way for people to free themselves. But the price has been paid by God Himself.

As was stated in the last study (Isaiah 43:1-13), there are two aspects of redemption that Isaiah is referring to in this prophetic passage. First there is the release from the physical captivity that the nation of Israel finds itself in due to God turning them over their enemies because of their sin (42:24-25). But there is also a distant future work being described here—the redemption paid by the blood of God’s own Son. In regards to the command “Do not fear” (43:1), Young writes, “Only if the heart of this word is found in the blood of Jesus Christ can there be any meaning to the command *fear not*. If the reference be only to the exodus from Egypt or only to the deliverance from exile, there is no ground for the command not to fear...The heart of the word, however, is in the cross of Christ...”<sup>2</sup>

As one contemplates the amazing grace of God in light of man’s foolishness, the call to praise is most appropriate. Isaiah 44:23 calls for all of God’s creation to shout forth God’s praise for His gracious redeeming work of His people. And as was discussed last week, it is for God’s glory that He has redeemed; it is for His glory that He does anything.

### CONCLUSION

In our studies throughout this legislative session, we have been focusing on the greatness and glory of God as it has been revealed in Isaiah 40-48. We have seen that God is all-knowing, omnipotent, eternal, wise, incomparable, sovereign, holy, good, great and gracious. He is the One who has created all things, sustains all things and redeems His people. There is no aspect of His creation that compares to Him. There is no idol that man has formed that can do anything, let alone, compete for the title of “God.”

Even though there is no way in which we can justify ourselves before this holy and great God, He has provided a way in which we can stand before Him sinless and pure. Through the work and only through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross can there be forgiveness and restoration. And He has called us to repent and believe; to turn from our sins and trust in His Son’s accomplished work so we may be redeemed.

So here is the question: God can forgive you of your sins, are you interested?

I will be more than glad to visit with you further about the answer to this question, if you so desire--just contact me.

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<sup>1</sup>Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Erdmann Publishing Co., 1993), 177.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.