

What was said?	What contrast was implied?
Men “form” idols (44:9)	God “forms” the world and his people
Idols do not help; give no profit (44:9)	God strengthens and helps his people
Their witness does not see, know (44:9)	God’s witnesses see and know
Idol makers tremble in fear (44:11)	God’s people need not fear
Idol makers will be ashamed (44:11)	God’s people will not be ashamed
Idol makers get tired and weary (44:12)	God’s strengthens so people are not weary
Idol makers measure on wood (44:13)	God measures out the heavens with his hand
Idols are images of humanity (44:13)	God made man in his image
Idols are wood and metal (44:14)	God made the wood and the metals
People worship what they make (44:15)	The Maker/Creator should be worshipped
People seek divine deliverance (44:17)	Only God can bring real deliverance
Idols blind people’s eyes (44:18)	God opens people’s eyes
Idols give no understanding (44:19)	God gives wisdom and understanding
Idolatry is a deceptive lie (44:20)	God reveals the truth
Idols lead people astray (44:20)	God calls people to turn from lies

(Smith 2009: 239)

v26 “Just as those prior to the exile would scoff at such words (Jerusalem was not going to fall; how could it be restored?), so would persons in the exile (the dream is over; face the facts)” (Oswalt 1998: 195).

“We would rather believe that we can capture the divine in the stuff of this world, with all the contradictions that involves, than to admit that God is utterly beyond our control and manipulation” (Oswalt 1998: 186).

“Our eyes and ears are constantly bombarded with lies about God and attractive alternatives to serving him, and we will be swamped by them unless we constantly call the truth to mind. This is where meditation on Scripture is such a strengthening thing for us, for it is full of the greatness and glory and faithfulness of God” (Webb 1996: 181).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What forms your ideas about God? How does your thinking about God affect your daily life?

What characteristics of God are given in this chapter? In chapters 40-44?

If Isaiah were writing a satirical poem like the one in verses 12-17 today, what would it be about?

ISAIAH 44: CREATED “GOD” VS. CREATOR GOD

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 44

- I. Do not fear for God will fulfill his promises to Abraham (44:1-5)
- II. Do not fear for God is incomparable (44:6-8)
- III. Go ahead and laugh at those who make and worship idols (44:9-20)
 - A. The coming shame of those who make idols (44:9-11)
 - B. The mundane process of making an idol (44:12-17)
 - C. The absurd folly of worshipping impotent idols (44:18-20)
- IV. Remember and rejoice that Israel’s God has created and will redeem Israel (44:21-23)
- V. Stand amazed at the revelation of who God is and what he will do (44:24-28)
 - creates heavens and earth and everything
 - makes liars out of false prophets
 - makes wise men fools
 - guarantees the accuracy of true prophets
 - promises to restore Jerusalem
 - dries up the watery deep
 - raises up a pagan king to order the rebuilding of Jerusalem

SOURCES CITED

John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, NICOT, 1998.
 Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, New American Commentary, 2009.
 Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah*, The Bible Speaks Today, 1996.

NOTES

vv1-5 “Here the focus is on broader issues: the very fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. God promises that the nation will survive and multiply, that it will be blessed and be a blessing, and that God’s life will be theirs through the Holy Spirit. None need fear that God cannot or will not keep his ancient covenant promises—he is faithful (2 Pet. 3:9)” (Oswalt 1998: 164).

v6 “That this language (*first and last*) is applied to Christ not once but four times in Revelation (1:17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13) is some indication of the force of the early church’s conviction that Jesus Christ was Yahweh incarnate” (Oswalt 1998: 171).

v7 “The fundamental proof of God’s uniqueness is his ability to predict what seems impossible and then bring it to pass” (Oswalt 171).

v8 “The imagery of God as a rock creates images of a solid foundation that is an immovable source of protection and an impregnable solid foundation (Deut 32:4,15,18,30,37; 1 Sam 2:2; Ps 18:31). Rocks provide security, deliverance from attack, and a hiding place; rocks do not change” (Smith 2009: 227).

v8 “When all the promises of the exile had come horrifyingly true, alongside them stood these detailed promises, equally old, that the exile would not be the end: *have I not made you hear from of old?* Before all the world Israel will be a living witness to the fact that God had predicted all of this far in advance, and that he had the power to make his promises come true” (Oswalt 1998: 172-73).

vv12-17 “The poet’s skill is in making painfully clear just how mundane the whole process is. He does so by taking us backward step-by-step from the end of the process to the beginning, showing in each stage how ludicrous it is for humans to make gods. We go from the final step of plating the wooden form with metal to the first step of planting seedlings from which the wood will be cut. The final irony is that the same log that supplies the god also supplies the fuel to heat the craftsman’s food and warm his body” (Oswalt 1998: 180).

v12 “The direction is thus, as it always is in nonbiblical religions, from humanity toward god. Humanity is creating god in its own image, and that is a compulsive, exhausting task, because it is ultimately futile. But apart from the revelation of the transcendent Creator, what other hope is there of giving meaning to one’s life and forging out some semblance of control over it?” (Oswalt 180).

v12 “The satirical point is that God gives strength to the weak person (40:29–31), but the construction of the idol-gods brings weakness to the person who makes it” (Smith 2009: 231).

v15 “Of course the question has to come up—how does one know which part of the tree is worthless and which part is a god? If one should accidentally choose the wrong part, one would be bowing down to something worthless and burning up a god!” (Smith 234).

vv16-17 “Ironically, people even today put very high value on some of the inanimate objects they own. They believe these objects can save them by giving them a high status in social situations, leverage in economic transactions, real security for the future, and importance in the eyes of others. They are not called “gods” today and they often are not made of wood, but they are objects of great desire” (Smith 2009: 234).

v17 “The petition brings the irony to its fine point. How can that which is solely the result of human effort and care, whose stuff humans have casually consumed in their own service, now turn around and care for them?” (Oswalt 1998: 183).

vv18-20 “It is always hard for people to see their own faults and the illogical thinking that goes into justifying their senseless beliefs and behavior patterns” (Smith 2009: 235).

v19 “Part of the reason why the idol worshippers never figured out that these gods of wood were worthless is that they were blindly following accepted cultural patterns of behavior and did not spend the time to meditate or consider the implications of what they were doing (44:19)” (Smith 2009: 235).