

Meditation on Isaiah 42-45

By Trisha Gerstel

Throughout the book of Isaiah there are several prophetic references to the Christ. Chapters 42 and 43 include such Messianic images, telling of one who will “bring justice to the nations” (42:1, NIV) as well as declaring His denial by the people of Israel. Reading over the following two chapters we could easily assume that they too were written specifically for the people of Israel to whom Isaiah was prophesying. But when we look more carefully we’ll see that, much like we look to Isaiah’s prophecies of the Messiah as further affirmation of Jesus as Christ, his writings in chapters 44 and 45 also carry weight for the modern-day Christian.

Just as statements such as “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight” (42:1 NIV) and ““Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!”“ (43:18-19 NIV) mirror New Testament accounts regarding Jesus (““This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased”“ (Matthew 3:17, NIV) and “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: The old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV)), we should view proclamations in chapters 44 and 45 as messages to all Christians. Here we are told that, even though we have been saved by the redeeming blood of the Savior, we still are in danger of worshipping idols.



I can say with almost 100 percent certainty that no one within our church has an idol in its strictest definition (“A representation or symbol of an object of worship; a false god” merriam-webster.com).

However, it is not the exacting definition but rather the overall substance of an idol that we need to be concerned about. Anything that we turn to instead of God, is an idol. At the end of each hard work day, do you pray to God for strength and rest or do you heap your plate full of comfort food? When you’re feeling a little

blue, do you praise the Lord for your blessings and allow Him to lift your spirit, or do you go on a shopping binge in an effort to fill the void? Do you give freely to those in need and trust in the Lord that He will provide, or do you squirrel away every last penny you can? I am not, of course, implying that there is anything wrong with enjoying a nice meal, purchasing an item, or being responsible with your money. It is the motivation for doing these things, though, which should be kept in check. If we enjoy food, purchase goods, or put aside financial savings while thanking the Lord for His provisions, then we are not treating them as idols but rather as gifts from God. If, however, we are doing these things in hopes that they will change your life, will give us hope, or will bring us comfort in some way, then we are worshipping them as idols.

And there is another dangerous form of idolatry that we can fall into: the worship of Me. We are warned of this in 45:9 (NIV): “Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker’.” I think of the times when God put it on my heart to do something, and I made up excuses why I couldn’t – shouldn’t – do what He requested of me; the times I read the Bible and decided that it didn’t really mean what it very plainly stated, but instead meant what I thought it should; and the times when I decided against giving my time and gifts and/or my money toward God’s work because, well, what I wanted was more important. We are humans, created beings. Our knowledge is limited, and we are mistaken when we allow ourselves to believe that we know more than or have a right to question the God “who created the heavens . . . who fashioned and made the earth” (45:18, NIV). When we do this we are putting ourselves above God and are holding ourselves up as an idol and would be wise to remember God’s declaration: “I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. . . . Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one” (44:6b, 8b).

