

## We Become What We Worship

“We resemble what we revere, either for ruin or restoration” (p. 49). This is the reverberating refrain in this book. This is the nature of idolatry, and readers will be forcefully confronted with the widespread and devastating problem of idolatry throughout Scripture. The scope and comprehensiveness of Beale’s treatment of this topic is unique. He anchors his work in Isaiah 6, and then he shows how these seminal ideas find their nascent beginning in Genesis and resurface all the way through Revelation as an overarching theme. Thus one comes to understand the significance of idolatry by virtue of its centrality to the Old and New Testaments as well as its pervasive and stubborn disruption to righteous living. Beale exegetes in such a way that the hermeneutical bridge from the past to the present is abundantly clear and convicting. He correctly states that humans are imaging beings and they will, one way or another, image something. They are meant to image God, but do they?

Beale combines grammatical-historical exegesis with canonical-contextual exegesis. The former involves examining the text within its particular literary and historical context, and the latter involves a careful study of a Scripture passage’s literary allusions to other passages. He refers to this combination as intertextuality. Therefore he relates the occurrence of words and phrases and their cultural implications used in one place to other occurrences of the same words and phrases in other Old and New Testament passages. He sees this as a *literary* link from a later word or phrase to an earlier one.

An example of this is what Beale refers to as “sensory-organ malfunction” (p. 49) found in Isaiah 6:9-13 and elsewhere. The idolatrous nature of this malfunction is this: While idols are supposedly spoken to and performed for in cultic worship, they do not *really* hear, see or understand. Thus Israel, in becoming like its idols, will likewise not hear, see, or understand what is spoken to them by God or the prophets; they will see but not see, hear but not hear, and thus not understand. This is precisely because they have *become* like their idols. Moreover, God will see that this happens as Israel’s punishment...

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