

Habakkuk 2:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

Analysis

God mocks idolatry: 'What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?' (mah-ho'il pesel ki-fesalo yotzro massekhah umoreh sheqer ki-vatach yotzer yitzro alav la'asoth elilim illeim). The rhetorical question expects the answer: nothing. Idols profit nothing because they're merely human creations. The 'maker' (yotzer) creates something, then absurdly 'trusteth therein' (vatach)—trusting what he himself fabricated. It's a 'teacher of lies' (moreh sheqer) because it falsely claims to be divine. Worst irony: they're 'dumb idols' (elilim illeim)—speechless, powerless. The passage exposes idolatry's fundamental irrationality: worshiping created things as if they were Creator, trusting human products as if they possessed divine power. This applies to all idolatry, ancient and modern—trusting anything created (wealth, power, success, relationships) rather than Creator.

Historical Context

Babylonian religion was elaborate, featuring numerous gods represented by ornate idols housed in magnificent temples. Vast resources went into crafting, maintaining, and honoring these images. Yet prophets consistently mocked their impotence (Isaiah 44:9-20, Jeremiah 10:1-16, Psalm 115:4-8). When Babylon fell to Persia (539 BC), its gods couldn't prevent conquest—proving their powerlessness. Cyrus's conquest demonstrated that Babylon's deities were useless. Only Yahweh,

the living God, controls history. The biblical critique of idolatry remains relevant: modern people worship money, pleasure, success, technology—created things that cannot ultimately satisfy or save. Only the Creator deserves worship and provides genuine security.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What modern forms of idolatry—trusting created things rather than Creator—exist in contemporary culture?
2. How does recognizing that humans create their own idols expose the irrationality of trusting them?
3. What is the difference between appropriately using created goods versus idolatrously trusting them for what only God can provide?

Interlinear Text

מָה	הוֹעִיל	פֶּסֶל	כִּי	פֶּסְלוֹ	יָצָרוֹ
H4100	What profiteth	the graven image	H3588	thereof hath graven	of his work
	H3276	H6459		H6458	H3336
מִסֵּכָה	וּמֹרֶה	שֶׁקֶר	כִּי	בֵטַח	יָצָרוֹ
it the molten image	and a teacher	of lies	H3588	trusteth	that the maker
H4541	H3384	H8267		H982	H3335
יָצָרוֹ	עַל יוֹ	לַעֲשֹׂת	אֱלִילִים	אֱלִילִים:	
that the maker	H5921	therein to make	idols	dumb	
H3335		H6213	H457	H483	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 10:8 (Parallel theme): But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.

1 Corinthians 12:2 (Parallel theme): Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Zechariah 10:2 (Parallel theme): For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

Isaiah 42:17 (Faith): They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

Isaiah 45:16 (Parallel theme): They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.

Jonah 2:8 (Parallel theme): They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

Revelation 19:20 (Parallel theme): And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that

had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Isaiah 1:31 (Parallel theme): And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

Isaiah 45:20 (Parallel theme): Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

Isaiah 37:38 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

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