

Isaiah 40:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

Analysis

This rhetorical question introduces a polemic against idolatry (verses 19-20). The Hebrew 'damah' (liken/compare) challenges any attempt to reduce God to creaturely categories. God's incomparability ('ein kamohu'—none like Him) is foundational to biblical monotheism and worship. Any image inherently diminishes and falsifies God's nature.

Historical Context

Surrounded by Babylonian idolatry with its elaborate god-images and religious iconography, Isaiah reminds Israel that their God transcends all representation and comparison.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What subtle forms of idolatry (mental images, expectations) do you impose on God?
2. How does God's incomparability prevent you from domesticating Him into a manageable deity?

Interlinear Text

אַל יְהִי כְּלִין לְאַתָּה וְאַל יְהִי כְּלִין לְאַתָּה
H413 H4310 To whom then will ye liken
H1819 H4100 God
H410 H1823 or what likeness

לֹא תְּמַכֵּן עַד כִּי עַד כִּי
will ye compare H0
H6186

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 46:5 (Parallel theme): To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

1 Samuel 2:2 (References God): There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

Exodus 15:11 (References God): Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Isaiah 40:25 (Parallel theme): To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

Acts 17:29 (References God): Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Psalms 89:6 (Parallel theme): For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?

Jeremiah 10:6 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.

Job 40:9 (References God): Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?

Psalms 89:8 (References God): O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

Exodus 8:10 (References God): And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.

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