

Psalm 115:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:

Analysis

They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not. The satire begins a devastating anatomical inventory of idol impotence. Each body part mentioned—mouth (peh, פֶּה), eyes (einayim, עַיִּם)—possesses form without function, appearance without ability. The repetitive structure ('they have X, but they X not') hammers home the absurdity through relentless parallelism.

Mouths that cannot speak mock the very purpose of mouths. Pagan worshipers prayed to statues that could neither hear petitions nor answer them. Contrast Yahweh, whose word created the universe (Genesis 1:3) and whose prophetic speech governs history. Eyes that cannot see expose idol blindness—they observe nothing, including their worshipers' plight. Yet Israel's God neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:4), watching over His people constantly.

This polemic appears throughout Scripture. Habakkuk mocks idols: 'Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach!' (Habakkuk 2:18-19). Jeremiah ridicules scarecrows that must be carried because they cannot walk (Jeremiah 10:5). The critique is both theological (idols are powerless) and ethical (idolaters become like their idols—deaf and blind to truth).

Historical Context

Ancient idol worship involved elaborate rituals addressing statues as if they were alive. Priests 'fed' idols daily meals, 'clothed' them in fine garments, and

'consulted' them through divination. The cognitive dissonance was profound: intelligent humans treating lifeless metal as deity. Yet the practice persisted because idols offered tangible religious experience and supported political power structures. Temples were economic engines and cultural centers, making idolatry resistant to rational critique. Only divine revelation could expose the emptiness behind the spectacle.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the satirical tone of this psalm model appropriate Christian response to false belief systems?
2. In what ways do modern people create 'gods' with impressive appearance but no real power to save or transform?
3. What does it mean practically that those who make idols 'become like them'— losing spiritual sight and hearing?

Interlinear Text

פָּה		לֹא	לְ	בָּם	וְ	רֹא	יְדַבֵּר	בְּ	עִינֵּים	וְ	בְּ	בָּם	לֹא	לְ	בָּם	עִינֵּים	וְ	בְּ	בָּם
They have mouths							but they speak		not eyes										
H6310		H1992		H3808		H1696		H5869		H1992		H3808							

!רֹא!

have they but they see

H7200

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 10:5 (Parallel theme): They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.

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