

Psalm 135:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

The critique intensifies through anatomical inventory: 'They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not.' Idols possess the appearance of sensory organs without their function. They have mouths crafted by artisans but cannot speak a single word - no revelation, no response to prayer, no guidance. They have eyes painted or inlaid with precious stones but perceive nothing - no awareness of worshiper's needs, no observation of human affairs. The contrast with Yahweh is implicit but devastating: the LORD speaks (His word fills Scripture), and His eyes run to and fro throughout the earth (2 Chronicles 16:9). The living God communicates and perceives; idols are cosmetically decorated corpses. This pattern of form without function exposes the futility of trusting what cannot engage with reality. Modern idols similarly promise much but deliver nothing of ultimate value.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern idols were often elaborately crafted with realistic features. Some traditions believed the deity inhabited the image after special rituals. The biblical critique dismisses such beliefs as self-deception. Eyes might be made of precious stones, mouths carefully carved and painted, yet they remained lifeless matter.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What is the danger of trusting in things that cannot truly see or speak?
2. How do lifeless idols contrast with the living God?

Interlinear Text

פֶה

They have mouths

H6310

אַל אַל פֶה

H1992

H3808

רֹאִים רֹאִים

but they speak

H1696

עַיִן עַיִן

not eyes

H5869

אַל אַל פֶה

H1992

H3808

רֹאִים!

have they but they see

H7200

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org