

46 40:18-24

must cast it, a goldsmith must plate it with gold, and a silversmith must cast silver chains. (20) A poor man, unable to purchase such an offering, will select a tree that will not rot, and look for a skillful craftsman to prepare an idol that will not totter.

All through the early history of Israel, idolatry was a constant danger. This theme would become particularly important during the Babylonian Exile, where the Israelites often saw great processions honoring the Babylonian gods and giving them credit for enabling the Babylonians to conquer so large a territory.

In these verses Isaiah shows the folly of idolatry. The idols are simply made by men. Human intelligence, strength, and skill utilize materials that God has created. How foolish it is to worship what man himself has made!

In our day idolatry seems like a relic of past times, yet we must recognize that the majority of mankind today worship something other than the true God. All that is said against idolatry in our passage is highly relevant to our present situation if we substitute for "idol" those other objectives or ideals to which men give the honor that should belong to the Creator. A very common type of present idolatry is the worship of human intelligence or human science, which are really only finite efforts to understand the world that the infinite God has made.

Verses 21-22 again emphasize God's great power in contrast to the weakness of human substitutes for God.

(21) Do you not know? Will you not listen? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not perceived the foundations of the earth? (22) He is the one who sits above the circle of the earth, to whom its inhabitants are like grasshoppers. It is He who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in. (23) He reduces princes to nothing and makes the judges of the earth meaningless. (24) Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, but he blows on them and they wither, and the storm carries them off like chaff.