



• Isaiah sees a day when Judah will receive the Holy Spirit

Isaiah writes in the eighth century BC. In the Holy Spirit he sees a day of Babylonian exile for the people of Judah. But he also sees a day when they will be brought back to Judah, when their sins will be forgiven and when the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon them. Isaiah goes on to speak of the certainty of the promise.

1. The promise is sure

1. **The promise is sure.** It is sure because of who God is.

*6'This is what Yahweh says, Israel's King and Redeemer, Yahweh Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.'*

• Because God is the Creator and Manager of all things

It is sure because God is the Creator and Manager of all things.

*7'Who then is like me? Let him summons things into being. Let him tell it the way it is, and get everything in its right place before me.'*

• Because God foreknows all things

It is sure because God – unlike any idol – is the One who foreknows all things.

*'Let him say what has happened since I appointed my everlasting people, and let him tell what is yet to come. Yes, in support of their case, let them tell what things shall come.'*

• God's people should not fear

So God's people are not to fear.

*8'Do not fear! Do not be afraid. Did I not long ago make you hear this and did I not tell you? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.'*

2. They must learn the futility of idols

2. **They must learn the futility of idols.** This is the reason why the people of Judah were sent into exile. The sin that steadily ruined Israel and Judah over many centuries was the sin of idolatry. They will eventually be rescued from Babylon but they must learn the lesson that caused their exile.

• Judah must learn that idolatry is a sin

*9All who make idols are futility itself, and the things they delight in are useless. As for those who would speak up for them, they themselves do not see, neither do they know anything. They deliberately move towards their own shame.*

• Idols are mere creations of the human mind

The idols are merely human, mere creations of the human mind.

*10Whoever has shaped a god has moulded an idol, which can profit him nothing!  
11Behold, all his associates will be put to shame; craftsmen are nothing but men.*

*Let them all come together and stand before it;  
they will suddenly be brought to fear and shame.*

*<sup>12</sup>The metalworker takes a tool  
and works with it in the coals;  
he shapes an idol with hammers,  
until he has completed it with the might of his arm.  
He gets hungry and loses his strength;  
he drinks no water and grows faint.*

*<sup>13</sup>The woodworker has done some measuring with a line.  
He makes an outline with a marker;  
he roughs it out with chisels  
and makes an outline with compasses.  
He shapes it in the form of man,  
of man in all his glory,  
that it may dwell in a shrine.*

**• The idols have  
no spiritual reality**

The idols have no spiritual reality. Half of a workman's material he uses to make a god, and the other half he uses for some ordinary purpose.

*<sup>14</sup>He cut down cedars for himself,  
he took a cypress or oak.  
He grew one specially strong for himself,  
one of the trees of the forest,  
or he planted a pine, and the rain made it grow.*

*<sup>15</sup>It is man's fuel for burning;  
some of it he takes and warms himself;  
yes, he kindles a fire and bakes bread.  
But he also fashions a god and bows down in worship to it;  
he makes an idol and falls down before it.*

*<sup>16</sup>Half of the wood he burns in the fire;  
over half of it he prepares his meal.  
He roasts his meat and eats his fill.  
He also warms himself and says,  
Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.'*

*<sup>17</sup>From the rest he makes a god, his idol;  
he bows down to it and worships.  
He prays to it and says,  
'Save me; you are my god.'*

**• How can  
something he  
made himself help  
him in time of  
trouble?**

How can something he himself made help him in time of trouble? He is totally self-deceived.

*<sup>18</sup>They know nothing, they discern nothing;  
their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see,  
and their hearts are closed so they cannot perceive.*

*<sup>19</sup>No one takes the matter to heart,  
no one has the knowledge or discernment to say,  
'Half of it I used for fuel;  
I even baked bread over its coals,  
I roasted meat and I ate.  
Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left?  
Shall I bow down to a block of wood?'*

*<sup>20</sup>He feeds on ashes! He has a deluded heart;  
it has misled him!  
He cannot save himself, or say,  
'Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?'*

**• Isaiah's message  
is still relevant  
– no idol can meet  
the needs of the  
human race**

1. The message of Isaiah is still up-to-date. It makes no difference whether our idols are creations of human hands or creations of human minds (philosophies, ideologies, political theories). None of them can solve the human predicament. No idol – material or intellectual – can meet the needs of the human race. Our experience of 'exile' is to teach us to learn the folly of our ways.

2. Our experience of human failure is to bring us to repentance. 'Repentance' first of all involves a change of mind. Human beings think they are so clever

• **Human failure brings us to repentance**

and in certain respects they are full of skill. Yet they do not have the skill to control their own lives, to come into clear vision of the things of God. They know nothing, they discern nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their hearts are closed so they cannot perceive. But spiritual 'exile' is to teach us to learn the folly of our ways, and open our eyes to our need. When we see that our idols cannot save us, then we have taken the first step into the kingdom of God.