

Isaiah OT651  
Professor Russel Mack  
Jay Harper

What can the church learn from Isaiah?

One of the things the church can learn from Isaiah is the ‘uniqueness of Yahweh’. We live in a pluralistic world, and it seems that what you believe or who you believe in doesn’t matter because inevitably we all serve and worship the same God. But according to Isaiah that is not true. He says God alone is exalted. Men make idols out of gold and silver and bow down to worship them. John Oswalt states, “It is said that to worship such things is like worshiping bates and moles. It reduces a person to the rocks and holes of the earth.”<sup>1</sup> So, how was Yahweh different from the gods of the Ancient Near East? What attributes did Yahweh have that other deities were not believed to have? “Prominent on the list would be the attributes relating to monotheism and formal relationships. He was jealous of any act that acknowledged other gods, and he was faithful to his covenant.”<sup>2</sup> Yahweh did not have the attributes of the gods of the Ancient Near East like lust, deception, or sexuality. He was not perceived in human terms and was not made out of objects of silver, gold, or bronze. Yahweh was seen as standing outside of creation. He was not the wind; he created the wind. He was not in the stars he created the stars. Even the disciples in the New Testament really didn’t know who Jesus really was. In Luke 8 Jesus rebuked the wind and raging waves so that they became calm and the disciples responded, “What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.” That is one of the reasons Genesis starts with the words “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1). Moses never starts off by explaining where God comes from, he merely states: “In the beginning God”

---

<sup>1</sup> John N. Oswalt, “The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah, Grand Rapids, MI 2003

<sup>2</sup> John H. Walton ‘Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament’, Grand Rapids, MI 2018

(Gen. 1:1). The key lesson that the church can learn from Isaiah is that God is a covenant God and “all the promises of God in him are yea and amen to the glory of God “(II Cor. 1:20). The church needs to understand that the covenant is perpetual and it’s not dependent upon our failures or achievements but God’s faithfulness alone. Theologian Steven L. McAvoy states: “The divine covenant motif is that which God alone pledges Himself to a course of action through a series of unilateral ramifications. The divine covenant is irreversible and is also not cancellable as a result of human failure. As, such, the perpetuation of the covenant is contingent upon God alone.”<sup>3</sup> Even the apostle Paul says, “Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.” (Rom. 11:1). The church is God’s people and we have a “New Covenant” with Jesus Christ. And Hebrews 12 says Jesus is the mediator of that new covenant. So, the church can have confidence that if God has started a good work in us, he will bring it to completion (Phl.1:6) because all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him.

---

<sup>3</sup> Steven L. McAvoy, "Abrahamic Covenant," Dictionary of Premillennial Theology: A Practical Guide to the People, Viewpoints, and History of Prophetic Studies, ed. Mai Couch (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1996), 1:27-31.