

# **Jeremiah 10 - Idols & the True God; The Coming Captivity of Judah**

## **II. Thirteen prophecies of judgment upon Judah (Jer 2:1–25:38)**

(1) Nine general prophecies of judgment that include offers of repentance (Jer 2:1–19:15)

(C) Third message: Temple's sermon (Jer 7:1–10:25)

(b) Reality and causes of coming judgment (Jer 8:4–10:25)

(vii) Idolatry (10:1-16)

(viii) Coming exile (10:17-22)

(ix) Invitation for wisdom (10:23-25)

### **Jeremiah 10**

(vii) Idolatry (10:1-16)

1 Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, house of Israel.

1 Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel.

1 Hear the message that the LORD has spoken to you, house of Israel.

1 Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:

2 This is what the LORD says: "Do not learn the way of the nations, And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens, Although the nations are terrified by them;

2 Thus says the LORD, "Do not learn the way of the nations, And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens Although the nations are terrified by them;

2 This is what the LORD says: |"Don't learn the way of the nations, and don't be terrified by signs in the heavens, though the nations are terrified of them.

2 Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

- The nations were frightened at the planetary motions. The nations are terrified of the signs for very good reasons: because they interfered with their lives, people get killed, and walls tumbled and fell.

— At 701 BC the thesis is that Earth was 360 day orbits and Mars had 720 day orbits; they had near pass-bys, and it depended upon which one was leading. The other was which one picked up energy or lost energy or added or lost days to their orbit.

— 701 BC was the last near pass-by in which the orbit stabilized. The point is that up until 701 BC the earth got along just fine on 360-day calendars. But in 701 BC something

happened that the world had to correct their calendars.

### **Christmas Trees**

3 For the customs of the peoples are futile; For it is wood cut from the forest, The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool.

3 For the customs of the peoples are delusion; Because it is wood cut from the forest, The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool.

3 For the practices of the people are worthless. Indeed, a tree is cut down from the forest; it's the work of the hands of a craftsman with an ax.

3 For the customs of the people are vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

4 "They decorate *the idol* with silver and gold; They fasten it with nails and hammers So that it will not totter.

4 "They decorate *it* with silver and with gold; They fasten it with nails and with hammers So that it will not totter.

4 They decorate it with silver and gold. They secure it with nails and hammers so it won't totter.

4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

- Christmas trees do have their roots in Babylon, and are vestiges of pagan legends. But what Jeremiah is talking about here relates only to Christmas trees in an extreme historical sense.

— The trimming of trees did in fact embody Babylon and has carried over to our culture today, in the form of the way many of us celebrate the holiday. What he is obviously dealing with here is idolatry. He is going to paint the picture that idols as being so much cumbersome baggage. He is pointing out that not only are they not assets, they are liabilities.

5 "They are like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, For they can do no harm, Nor can they do any good."

5 "Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, For they can do no harm, Nor can they do any good."

5 Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field. They can't speak! They must always be carried because they can't walk! Don't be afraid of them because they can do no harm, nor can they do any good."

5 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.

- His argument here is that idols are useless; it can't do you any harm, it can't do you any good. That happens to not be really true, I don't want to destroy the thrust of what Jeremiah is saying, but just as a footnote, is that he is dealing here in a poetical summary.  
— To argue that they cannot do evil is wrong, because we know from both New Testament and Old Testament revelation that when you worship an idol you worship Satan. Behind the idols are demons; they are what is called an entry.

### **Palm Trees and Groves**

"Palm tree" - the Hebrew word is *tomar*, and it is translated palm tree in the King James, but that is misleading, because it is more like a pillar. What most scholars see in that phrase is what is called a phallic symbol, that they were trimmed and designed to be a fertility symbol. And so when you see pillars or palm trees, in the Old Testament called groves, they are really talking about an area typically on top of a hill, where there were trees. They trimmed the trees, making a pagan fertility offering place for that, so it was a place of sex orgies and such that were involved in the Canaanite sex worship which had to do with their concepts of trying to encourage fertility of the crops. That is why God commands never to have his altars on the hilltops by the trees or groves, because these places would be defiled by these pagan practices.

**6** There is none like You, LORD; You are great, and Your name is great in might.

**6** There is none like You, O Lord; You are great, and great is Your name in might.

**6** There is no one like you, LORD. You are great, and your name is great and powerful.

**6** Forasmuch as *there is* none like unto thee, O LORD; thou *art* great, and thy name *is* great in might.

**7** Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You.

**7** Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You.

**7** Who wouldn't fear you, king of the nations? This is what you deserve! Indeed, among all the wise men of the nations, and throughout all their kingdoms, there is no one like you!

**7** Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise *men* of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, *there is* none like unto thee.

8 But they are altogether stupid and foolish; The instruction *from* idols is *nothing but* wood!

8 But they are altogether stupid and foolish *In their* discipline of delusion—their idol is wood!

8 Everyone is stupid and senseless. They follow worthless instruction from a piece of wood!

8 But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock *is* a doctrine of vanities.

9 Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, And gold from Uphaz, The work of a craftsman and of the hands of a goldsmith; Their clothing is of violet and purple; They are all the work of skilled people.

9 Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, And gold from Uphaz, The work of a craftsman and of the hands of a goldsmith; Violet and purple are their clothing; They are all the work of skilled men.

9 Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz. The idols are the work of a craftsman and of the hands of a goldsmith. Their clothing is violet and purple. The idols are all the work of skilled craftsmen.

9 Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple *is* their clothing: they *are* all the work of cunning *men*.

- Blue and purple dyes are non-trivial technology, it turns out that getting garments died in ancient cultures was very expensive.

10 But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. The earth quakes at His wrath, And the nations cannot endure His indignation.

10 But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, And the nations cannot endure His indignation.

10 The LORD is the true God; he's the living God and the everlasting king. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation.

10 But the LORD *is* the true God, he *is* the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

- The idea is that the idols are vanity, the actual word is like breath without substance, and they are a burden to be carried like cumbersome baggage.

11 This is what you shall say to them: "The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under these heavens."

11 Thus you shall say to them, "The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens."

**11** Tell this to them: "The gods who didn't make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from these heavens."

**11** Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

- Verse 11 is the only verse in this book that is written in Aramaic or Chaldean. There has been a lot of scholars that wonder why Jeremiah wrote this in Chaldean. The reason is: so that even the pagan nations would be indicted by what it says.

- In other words, our God, the living God, is going to abide forever, but the gods that they are worshiping are going to be destroyed, and that phrase is written in a language that they could understand.

### **A Hymn of Praise to God**

**12** *It is* He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.

**12** *It is* He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.

**12** The LORD is the one who made the world by his power, who established the earth by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

**12** He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

**13** When He utters His voice, *there is* a roar of waters in the heavens, And He makes the clouds ascend from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, And brings out the wind from His storehouses.

**13** When He utters His voice, *there is* a tumult of waters in the heavens, And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, And brings out the wind from His storehouses.

**13** When his voice sounds there is thunder from the waters of heaven, and he makes clouds rise up from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain and brings wind out of his storehouses.

**13** When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

- The book of Revelation describes His voice like the voice of many waters. Between Proverbs, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes you can find the whole water cycle. Solomon asks, why do the all the rivers run into the sea, but the sea doesn't get fuller, and he points out evaporation, clouds, and rain.

14 Every person is stupid, devoid of knowledge; Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, For his cast metal images are deceitful, And there is no breath in them.

14 Every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge; Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols; For his molten images are deceitful, And there is no breath in them.

14 Everyone is stupid and without knowledge. Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false. There is no life in them.

14 Every man is brutish in *his* knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them.

15 They are worthless, a work of mockery; At the time of their punishment they will perish.

15 They are worthless, a work of mockery; In the time of their punishment they will perish.

15 They're worthless, a work of mockery, and when the time of punishment comes, they'll perish.

15 They *are* vanity, *and* the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

16 The Portion of Jacob is not like these; For He is the Maker of everything, And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance; The LORD of armies is His name.

16 The portion of Jacob is not like these; For the Maker of all is He, And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance; The LORD of hosts is His name.

16 The Portion of Jacob is not like these. He made everything, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance. The LORD of the Heavenly Armies is his name.

16 The portion of Jacob *is* not like them: for he *is* the former of all *things*; and Israel *is* the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts *is* his name.

- From v12-16 we are going to encounter all that again in Jer 51:15-19; this whole idea will be elaborated on later in Jeremiah. It is the whole extolling of the power of God, especially visible in nature, and his unique relationship with Israel is the theme here. Verses 1-16, if you have been really studying this whole passage of 7-10, the last 16 verses are almost a parenthesis.

#### (viii) Coming exile (10:17-22)

17 Pick up your bundle from the ground, You who live under siege!

17 Pick up your bundle from the ground, You who dwell under siege!

17 You who live under siege, Gather up your bundle from the ground.

17 Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress.

18 For this is what the LORD says: "Behold, I am slinging out the inhabitants of the land At this time, And I will cause them distress, So that they may be found."

18 For thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am slinging out the inhabitants of the land At this time, And will cause them distress, That they may be found."

18 For this is what the LORD says: "I'm going to throw out the inhabitants of the land at this time, and I'll bring distress on them so they'll experience it."

**18** For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find *it so*.

- What we will now get into is a wrap-up of what is sometimes called the Temple Sermon that he is never forgiven for. What we are also going to see here is him indulging in what sounds like a dialogue between Jeremiah and a personified Jerusalem, and the blame for the judgment is on the leadership.

**19** Woe to me, because of my injury! My wound is incurable. But I said, "This certainly is a sickness, And I must endure it."

**19** Woe is me, because of my injury! My wound is incurable. But I said, "Truly this is a sickness, And I must bear it."

19 Woe is me because of my injury. My wound is severe. I said, "Truly this is my sickness, and I must bear it.

19 Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this *is* a grief, and I must bear it.

20 My tent is destroyed, And all my ropes are broken. My sons have gone from me and are no more. There is no one to stretch out my tent again Or to set up my curtains.

20 My tent is destroyed, And all my ropes are broken; My sons have gone from me and are no more. There is no one to stretch out my tent again Or to set up my curtains.

20 My tent is destroyed, and all my tent cords are broken. My sons have gone away from me, they no longer live. There is no one to pitch my tent again and set up my curtains.

20 My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they *are not*: *there is* none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.

21 For the shepherds have become stupid And have not sought the LORD. Therefore they have not prospered, And all their flock is scattered.

21 For the shepherds have become stupid And have not sought the Lord; Therefore they have not prospered, And all their flock is scattered.

21 Because the shepherds are stupid and don't seek the LORD, therefore, they don't prosper, and their flock is scattered.

21 For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

22 The sound of a report! Behold, it is coming— A great roar from the land of the north—  
To make the cities of Judah A desolation, a haunt of jackals.

22 The sound of a report! Behold, it comes— A great commotion out of the land of the  
north— To make the cities of Judah A desolation, a haunt of jackals.

22 The sound of a report, it's coming now! There is a great commotion from a land in the  
north to make the towns of Judah desolate, a refuge for jackals."

22 Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country,  
to make the cities of Judah desolate, *and* a den of dragons.

(ix) Invitation for wisdom (10:23-25)

**23** I know, LORD, that a person's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a person who walks to  
direct his steps.

**23** I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct  
his steps.

23 LORD, I know that a person's life is not his to control, nor does a person establish his  
way in life.

23 O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to  
direct his steps.

- Interesting phrase here "*it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps." It is interesting  
that no man can decide the course of his life. (How much poetry and schooling have we  
had to set a direction for our lives?) But in the last analogy there is no way to get any  
blessings without God's help. You can find this in Ps 37:25; Prov 16:9, 20:24, but these  
ideas are all throughout the Bible.

24 Correct me, LORD, but with justice; Not with Your anger, or You will bring me to  
nothing.

24 Correct me, O LORD, but with justice; Not with Your anger, or You will bring me to  
nothing.

24 LORD, correct me, but with justice, not with anger. Otherwise, you'll bring me to  
nothing.

24 O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to  
nothing.

25 Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You, And on the families who do  
not call upon Your name; For they have devoured Jacob; They have devoured him and  
consumed him, And have laid waste his settlement.

25 Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You And on the families that do not call Your name; For they have devoured Jacob; They have devoured him and consumed him And have laid waste his habitation.

25 Pour out your anger on the nations that don't acknowledge you, and on the families that don't call on your name. For they have devoured Jacob; they have devoured and consumed him; they have devastated his habitation.

25 Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

- Really a rhetorical device, trying to say we know you are just trying to punish us, but don't forget those guys, they are even worse

- This verse is recited annually at the Passover Seder