

Worship the True God

The Living God vs. the Dead Gods (Jeremiah 10.1-16)

1-2

be separate (Leviticus)

- no eating unclean animals (Lev 11)
- no mixing seeds for fields (Deut 22.9)
- no plowing with an ox & donkey together (Deut 22.10)
- no mixing fibers for clothing (Deut 22.11)
- tassles on the four corners of garments (Deut 22.12)
- no working on Saturday (Ex 20.8-11)
- no cutting/tattooing when mourning the dead (Lev 19.28)

Lev 18.24-26; 20.7-8, 22-26

- God gave them customs different than the nations to keep them separate/holy
- Why? To prevent syncretism (idol worship, moral evil, etc.)

signs of the heavens

- “Astrology, first elaborated in the temples of Mesopotamia, whence it spread to Greece and Rome, was an extremely important element in ancient civilization. Every level of society was affected by its fatalistic belief in the influence of the apparent motions of heavenly bodies on human destinies. During certain periods of antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, it commanded the ardent allegiance of the best minds; even emperors resorted to it.” Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (Peabody: Prince Press 1962), part II, p. 20.
- These signs included comets, eclipses, unusual cosmic occurrences

3

customs are a delusion

- lying is ok, if nobody gets hurt
- stealing is fine if someone really needs it
- marijuana is ok since it is not a hard drug
- getting drunk is fine so long as you are celebrating something with friends
- ladies and gentlemen, the nations are still deluded (more than 2,500 years later)
- going down stream, cultural currents carry you if you do nothing, must engage your arms/legs swim against current towards God...b/c at the end--if you just give up--is a waterfall and death

supreme example of delusion => idolatry

- cutting wood takes work, no chainsaw, story from Michael's house (demonstration?)

4-5

utter folly of idolatry

- the person makes the god
- utter paralyzed nature of idols
- cannot exist without being made
- cannot dress itself
- cannot stand on its own w/o tottering
- cannot walk
- cannot do harm
- cannot do good

- utterly impotent, frozen, limited, motionless, finite, sub-human
- yet, thousands and millions have worshiped them for thousands of years (in a mere 3 verses Jeremiah has deconstructed the whole practice!) What does that tell us? They were all stupid? No! To think that is to fall into the trap of chronological snobbery...rather, this should tell us that it is extremely difficult to see above the crowd, to hear the one instrument playing a different song in the midst of a symphony, to detect inconsistencies within one's own worldview and culture
 - o for example, common sense changes in every generation (calling vs. going to websites to add event to community calendar, getting paid more vs. getting an extra day off work, bloodletting, thinking the world was flat—that the sun orbited the earth)

6-7

an eruption of praise

- overwhelmed by the contrast Jeremiah erupts into praising God
- Yahweh is great, powerful, feared, beyond all the wisest men of the nations

8-9

more deconstruction

- idols must have been impressive or else the statement “their idol is wood!” would be superfluous
- pictures of Titus head
- so, imagine a massive standing structure, in the inner part of a holy shrine, with incense burning, ornately decorated with gold and silver, and with priests dressed in fine clothing
- he names the ingredients of the idol (wood, gold, silver, clothing)
- all the work of craftsmen, skilled men and women

10

the living God

- Yahweh is the true God
- living, everlasting, king, powerful, wrath

11

non-creator gods will die

- this verse in Aramaic
- commandment: tell them “the gods that...”
- people were about to go into captivity into Babylon where Aramaic was the common language
- was Jeremiah giving the people of Israel the exact words to say to their captors in the very language they would understand?

12-13

- powerful, wise, and genius creator
- power over waters, clouds, lightning, rain, and wind

14-15

- every man (i.e. all idolaters, cf. NET)
- images are deceitful, they appear to be grandiose but they can't even breathe (my dog can breathe, pigs can breathe, a rat can breathe)

16

- portion: “Yahweh, who is the inheritance of Jacob's descendants is not like them” (NET)
- again he is called the creator
- Israel is God's special people

some context:

- Babylonia was gobbling up countries left and right
- the great Assyrian Empire had fallen to Babylonia
- Judah and her capital, Jerusalem, was hanging on by a thread in Jeremiah's lifetime
- early message: repent, give up the sinning
- later message: do not resist Babylonia, God is using them to punish you
 - o people will go into captivity
 - o they will live in Babylonia for 70 years
 - o then they will return to the holy land and rebuild Jerusalem
- the people already had constant trouble with idolatry from the time they came out of Egypt, to when they were in the desert, to when they first entered the promised land under the Judges, to the kings starting with Solomon onwards
- now they would see new and strange idols that the powerful Babylonians worshiped
- there would be a massive temptation to worship the gods that defeated their own Yahweh
- one may think Jeremiah's task was impossible...how could a people who never really gave up idolatry in their entire history suddenly give it up when they were now living scattered abroad among the idolatrous Gentiles?
- yet, it worked! the Jews were cured of idolatry and when they came back, they never again returned to idolatry since

for us today:

- do you live as if God does not exist all week except Sunday morning once in a while?
- be real honest with you
- Jer. 10.10 "but Yahweh is the true God"
- is Jesus Yahweh? (Acts 3.13)
- Jesus himself said he had a God (Rev 3.12)
- if Jesus is not Yahweh, then you should not worship him
- idolatry is worshiping someone in Yahweh's place
- golden calf wasn't a new God, but a new way to worship the invisible God (Ex 32.4-5)
- if you are worried Jesus won't get the worship...don't...every Sunday hundreds of millions of Christians rise early to praise him as God

concluding points:

- Yahweh is the living, powerful, wise, genius creator at whose wrath the nations tremble. He is the one who controls the waters, clouds, lightning, rain, wind. He is great, powerful, and to be feared. He is the inheritance of God's people. Worship God, he is worthy.
- truth matters, our current cultural climate devalues truth saying that being nice is all that matters...I'm sure there were many nice idol worshipers, but God was still offended at such behavior as we can see over and over in the Scriptures. Truth matters. Love matters. Let's do both, and not just fall into the mold set for us by our culture.