

**UNIT 7 JEREMIAH AND THE PROPHETIC MOVEMENT LESSON 4****"THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD"****STUDY PASSAGE: Jeremiah Chapter 10**

Why do people lose the sense of whole-heartedness in their devotion for God? It is because they lose sight of God himself and are attracted towards other objects which become a substitute for God. Idolatry can take any form. It can be the worship of a creation of God, or of man. It may not actually be worship of these things, but only pre-occupation with them. Yet, if they distract from God, it is idolatry. Jeremiah 10:1-16 interrupts the sequence of thought between the close of chapter 9 and 10:17-25. It is strategically placed between the prophet's condemnation of empty religion and his pronouncement of imminent judgment.

1. WHAT DID JEREMIAH THINK OF IDOLATRY?

Notice how convincingly this passage demonstrates the folly and ineffectiveness of pagan worship as opposed to the worship of the powerful and majestic Creator of the Universe. The prophet saw the gods as blocks of wood, inert, dumb, and scorned them as a scarecrow in a garden patch, set up by men to frighten birds, not a holy power that could discipline the rebellious human heart. Idolatry everywhere invites the same biting irony. Not so the God of Israel!

Verses 9,10 show that idols might be attractive in appearance but they were insignificant in contrast to the true God.

Verse 11, written in Aramaic prose, appears to be a popular anti-polytheistic response probably made by Hebrews when invited to join in idol worship. Idols will be destroyed.

Verses 12-16 provide a poetic description of the world sovereignty of the One True God (cf 51:15-19). Man is awed by the creation of God. God made the world and has control of it. In comparison, man and his creations (idols) seem stupid and senseless.

The essential argument against the worthlessness of idolatry is that the One True God is the Ever-living Sovereign Creator of all things, while idols are the ineffective, lifeless creations of men. It is illogical to treat God like any other deity from one of the neighbouring nations. Yet Judah had found fascination with these things, and had incorporated their rituals, images, morals and customs into her society. Jeremiah's monotheistic concept of the unique God of Israel was like a mountain peak rising from the plain, in the context of his generation. It was this understanding of God that inspired his courageous stand against the tide of evil in his day.

2. HOW DID THE PROPHETS THINK OF GOD?

One of the distinguishing marks of Hebrew prophecy was its concept of God. The God of Israel was not merely a national deity. He was the One True God, the living Lord of Creation, Lord of the



Nations, and Lord of History controlling them, ruling them, yet wholly above them. A prominent note of the Hebrew prophet was his confidence that God was sovereign over the affairs of men, and was working out His own purpose in the historical process of the world. It was this concept that fired the prophets' scathing denunciations of men's rebellious indifference to God and their worship of idols. He alone deserved reverence and allegiance.

HOSEA.

To read through the prophecy of Hosea, being sensitive towards his understanding of God, is to be overwhelmingly impressed with the possibility of a personal, intimate knowledge of a living, loving God.

JOEL.

The theme of Joel's message is the imminent advent of the Day of the Lord. The prophet sensed the approaching footsteps of God as He was coming to vindicate His Name, and Hosea had an awesome respect for God's power and authority.

AMOS.

The one aim of Amos was to vindicate the righteous Name and character of God. Because Israel had abused her relationship to God by unrighteous behaviour, judgment was the inevitable consequences to be expected.

OBADIAH and JONAH.

These two prophets carried messages of God's displeasure with nations beyond Israel. Obadiah denounced Edom's arrogant gloating over the downfall of Judah. His prophecy reflected his consciousness of God's universal Kingship (vs. 2,8,15,21). Jonah foretold the approach of judgment upon the city of Nineveh, because of its wickedness.

MICAH.

In an age of moral and social corruption, Micah held out a view of a victorious God who would be great in His judgments of evil-doers, great in His universal reign of peace and prosperity, and great in His compassion and pardon of the humble.

HABAKKUK.

All the prophets were convinced of the everlasting, sovereign and holy nature of God. For Habakkuk, this presented problems. Firstly, he was concerned that God hadn't intervened to resist the injustices and violence of the wicked (1:2-4). God indicated He was raising the Babylonians to power, to be His means of judgment (1:5, 6).

Then Habakkuk couldn't understand how a pure and holy God could perform His operations in history, using such impure instruments as a pagan nation (cf. 2:13). He received no answer to this question. Sometimes the intellectual problems encountered in seeking to understand the divine moral government of the universe have no solution.

**EZEKIEL.**

Chapters 1-3 of Ezekiel describe the dazzling and overpowering vision of the majesty and mystery of the Almighty, which came to the prophet in his remote place of exile in Babylon. In the midst of a thunderstorm, there came to Ezekiel a realisation of God as Lord of the Universe, controller of man's destiny, all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present.

ISAIAH.

We have looked briefly at the impression of God that motivated some of the other prophets. When we examine Isaiah, we find him overawed by the holy and righteous majesty of the Lord of hosts (cf. 1:4, 24; 2:12, 21; 5:16; 8:13; 10:16-18; 28:5-6).

SECOND ISAIAH.

The author of chapters 40-55 of the Book of Isaiah is sometimes referred to as "Second Isaiah" because it appears to have been written by someone, and to a situation, about a century and a half after Isaiah had died. "Second Isaiah" anticipates the imminent revelation of the glory of the Lord, and explains the Divine purposes at work in history. He describes the Divine Shepherd-King (Isaiah 40) and the Sovereign Redeemer (Isaiah 41-45). Because he had an exalted view of God, the prophet possessed a vital faith and unshakeable hope. The Everlasting Lord of Creation and History was his own personal God. "Second Isaiah" also shared Jeremiah's view of God and idols. The idols man creates - no matter how elaborate - are lifeless, powerless, motionless, speechless. Not so the God of Israel (Isaiah 40:18-20; 44:9-20).

3. THE COMING EXILE (Jeremiah 10:17-25)

The people are to prepare for flight. This is all the result of bad leadership of the leaders, who, having lost touch with Yahweh, were unable to shepherd the people to safety (v.19-24). The old home was to become a jackal lair. The prophet acknowledges his limitation (v23).

In verse 24 Jeremiah makes a plea, not for himself, but for the nation whose doom is breaking his heart.

He pleads for vindication as Moses pleaded for his people. (Verse 25 is repeated in Psalm 79:6,7).

The prophet appears to turn in anger upon a nation summoned by God to carry out his retributive purpose over Judah.

QUESTION 1:

What was Jeremiah's opinion of pagan interpretations of heavenly portents which inspire terror (vs. 2-3a)?

How did the logic of Jeremiah's scathing ridicule point out the impotence of pagan idols (3-5)?



QUESTION 2:

What was Jeremiah's attitude toward God in contrast to his scorn of idols (vs. 6-8)?

QUESTION 3:

In what particular matters did Jeremiah contrast the activity of God with that of man (vs. 12,14)? How is the sovereignty of God demonstrated in both His Works (vs. 12,13), and Name (vs.16)?

QUESTION 4:

What does Jonah reveal concerning the nature of God (1:3,4,9, 15,17; 2:2,7,10; 3:10; 4:2)?

QUESTION 5:

Isaiah was overawed by the holy majesty of God. What experience left this lasting attitude with him (Isaiah 6:1-8)?

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

Habakkuk was concerned that God hadn't intervened to resist the injustice and violence of the wicked (1:2-4). What answer did he receive to indicate that God was doing something about it (1:5-6)? Then he couldn't understand why God would use pagan nations to do his work. He received no answer to this question. What message does Habakkuk provide for this sort of difficulty (Habakkuk 2:4,20)? What does it say to you personally?