

LEARN NOT THE WAY OF THE HEATHEN

TEXT: JEREMIAH 10:1-25

INTRODUCTION:

1. Jeremiah 10 is a continuation of the message began in Jeremiah 7:1.
2. The LORD told Jeremiah to stand in the temple gate and preach to the people as they were entering the temple.
3. Their crowning sin was idolatry. They went to the temple to worship God, but they continued to worship Baal and the other heathen gods (cf. 7:9, 30; 9:14).
4. They even sacrificed their children to demons in the valley of the son of Hinnom (7:31).
5. They were also guilty of worshipping the sun, the moon, and the stars (cf. 8:1, 2), which Jeremiah refers to again in chapter 10.
6. Jeremiah 10:2 says, "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."

I. THE PEOPLE'S IDOLATRY

1. Idolatry has been a problem since the beginning. In Joshua 24:2, Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods."
2. Abraham was an idolater before God saved him.
3. Laban, the father of Rachel, and father-in-law to Jacob, was an idolater, and in Genesis 31:19 we read that Rachel stole her father's idols. However she did not tell Jacob.
4. Laban chased after Jacob, and when he caught up with him he rebuked him and said, "Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" (Gen. 31:30).
5. The Egyptians were idolaters, and Israel picked up their idolatrous ways when they were living there. Leviticus 18:3 says, "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do."
6. When Moses was meeting with God up on Mount Sinai, his brother Aaron and the backslidden Israelites made and worshipped a golden calf (Ex. 32).
7. Many other examples could be mentioned. Idolatry is in the wicked heart of man, so I John 5:21 says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."
8. And here in Jeremiah 10:2, the LORD says, "Learn not the way of the heathen."
9. Astrology is popular today, but it is thoroughly heathen.

10. Psychics, fortune-telling, tarot cards, crystal balls, séances, botanicas, etc. are "the way of the heathen."
11. Parents who teach their children to celebrate Halloween are teaching them "the way of the heathen."
12. And I hate to say this because most of the children in our church attend public schools, but it is in the public schools that many children are learning the way of the heathen (<http://indoctrinationmovie.com/>).
13. Christians learn the way of the heathen by watching their ungodly entertainment, and listening to their ungodly music, etc.
14. It is no coincidence that the worldly crowd's most popular show is called "American Idol."
15. God told Israel, "Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them" (10:2). "Dismayed" means to be afraid.
16. The heathens deified the heavenly bodies, and were terrified by celestial signs such as eclipses and comets, which they construed as the displeasure of the gods (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
17. In his scathing condemnation against their idolatry, Jeremiah pointed out how foolish it was (10:3-5). The idol had to be nailed down lest it fall down or was stolen (10:4).
18. The idols "speak not" (10:5), but the living God speaks from heaven (cf. 10:1).
19. First Thessalonians 1:9 says they "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."
20. Jeremiah 10 contrasts the living and true God with dead idols:
 - Jer. 10:6 says, "there is none like unto thee, O LORD..."
 - God is to be feared and revered as the "King of nations" (10:7).
 - Verse 8 says those who worship idols "are altogether brutish and foolish" (stupid, cf. vs. 14, 15). "The stock (tree -- cf. vs. 3) is a doctrine of vanities" (nothing; worthless).
 - Verse 10 says, "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 true and living God is our Creator (10:11-13). Evolution is a modern form of idolatry. "Theistic evolution" is an unscriptural compromise.
 - Verse 16 says the God of Jacob is "the former of all things." This means he is the maker and creator of all things. "The LORD of hosts is his name" (10:16b).

II. THE PUNISHMENT FOR THEIR SIN

1. Verse 17 says, "Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress." The "fortress" refers to their protection during the coming siege.
2. Jeremiah is telling them to get ready to go into exile. But the people did not obey Jeremiah, and unfortunately the false prophets told them everything would be okay (cf. 8:10, 11).
3. Unlike the false prophets, Jeremiah told them the truth. The LORD was going to "sling out the inhabitants of the land" (10:18).
4. The punishment would be very painful, but they had been warned many times (10:19, 20).
5. Three times in this chapter the people are called "brutish," i.e. stupid (10:8, 14, 21).

III. THE PROPHET'S PRAYER (10:23-25)

1. In his prayer, Jeremiah confessed his dependence upon God (10:23).
2. Proverbs 20:24 says, "Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?"
3. In his prayer, Jeremiah identified himself with his nation (10:23-25).
4. Nehemiah and Daniel did this also (cf. Neh. 1:6-11; Dan. 9:3-20).
5. Jeremiah not only prayed for "correction" (10:24), he also asked the LORD to pour out His fury upon the heathen (10:25).
6. Verses like this bother people who do not understand Scripture. Merrill Unger says, Jeremiah "cried out for retribution upon Israel's enemies. It was not a prayer of hate of a nationalistic Jew vented against the detested Gentiles. It was a Spirit-indited prayer that God might destroy them before they accomplished their wicked plan to destroy God's people and His plan of redemption through them" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).

CONCLUSION:

1. I read this article on line this morning: a conference of the world's top astrologers was recently held in New Orleans and about 1,500 people participated in workshops and panel discussions.
2. Not to be confused with astronomy, which is the scientific study of the physical universe, astrology uses non-scientific methods to predict how the relative positions of celestial bodies may influence human behavior and future events (cf. Jer. 10:2).

3. These astrologers are pretty certain that this November's election will be similar to what happened in the 2000 election, when the election results were disputed by Al Gore.
4. However, according to the predictions of five astrologers who attended this conference, Barack Obama will win re-election in November.
5. While attempting to persuade Brutus to join his conspiracy to assassinate Julius Caesar, Shakespeare has Cassius say, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves, that we are underlings."
6. Brutus was correct to say the fault is not in the stars, however, it is not in ourselves either. Jeremiah said, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23).