

# Idolatry

Jeremiah 44

# Idolatry Introduction

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- If we filtered out everything except **The Most Important Thing** to us, what would be left of us?
- In other words, what or in whom have we placed our ultimate commitment?

# Idolatry Introduction



*If one and only one Being in the universe is God, then only this Being is worthy of worship: Nothing else than the Ultimate is worthy of an ultimate commitment (which is worship).*

*– Norman Geisler, in Systematic Theology*

# Idolatry Introduction

## Exodus 20:2-5 (ESV)

And God spoke all these words, saying,

<sup>2</sup> “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them ...

# Idolatry Introduction

- Israel ignored this.
- In **Jeremiah 44** we will see what their idolatry looked like at the time of their exile.

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

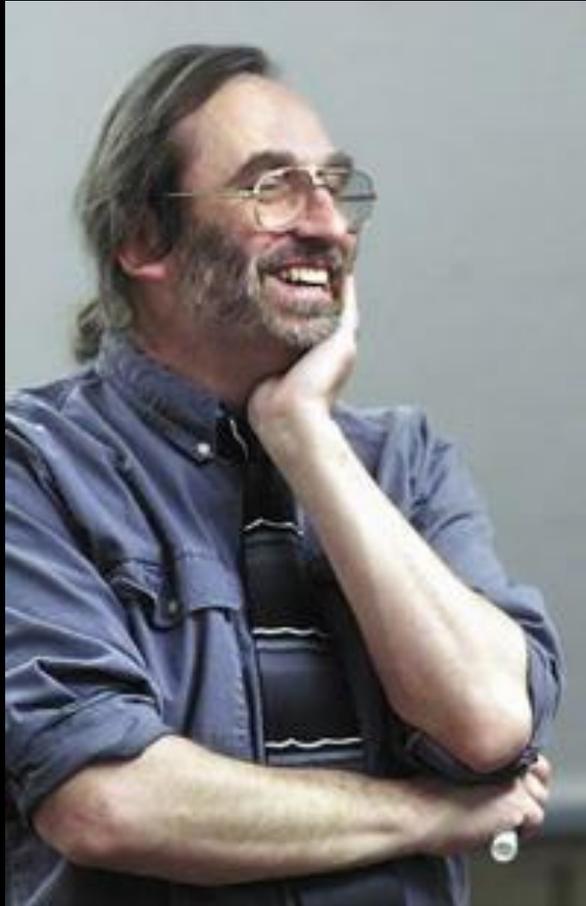
# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

Idolatry begins with the rejection of God.

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

- Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, theories of religion appeared that said all cultures begin with “primitive” beliefs like spiritism, animism polytheism, etc.
- They later develop into more advanced beliefs like the ethical monotheism of the Jews, Christians and Muslims.

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10



*In many cultures that are primarily animistic but also recognize a supreme god, the mythologies usually refer to a time when the relationship between the high god and human beings was closer than it is today ...*

*– Winfried Corduan,  
in Neighboring Faiths*

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

## Description of the Original Monotheism (Winfried Corduan):

1. There is one God who has personhood (as opposed to being an impersonal force).
2. God is referred to with masculine grammar and has masculine qualities.
3. God apparently lives in the sky (heaven).
4. God has great knowledge and power.
5. God created the world.

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

## Description of the Original Monotheism (Winfried Corduan):

5. God is the author of standards of good and evil.
6. Human beings are God's creatures and are expected to abide by God's standards.
7. Human beings have become alienated from God by disobeying God's standards.
8. God has provided a method of overcoming the alienation.

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10



*Virtually every religious culture carries a vestige of monotheism that can be identified as a variation of the nine-point description. And the tribes that are least developed in terms of their overall material culture provide some of the strongest support for original monotheism.*

*– Winfried Corduan,  
in Neighboring Faiths*

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

## Romans 1:18-23 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

## Romans 1:18-23 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

## Romans 1:18-23 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

# Israel's Rejection of God 44:1-10

- Israel rejected God.
- They remained committed to idols.
- Their idols ultimately destroyed them.

# Israel's Devotion to Idols 44:15-19

# Israel's Devotion to Idols 44:15-19

Idolatry is deceptive.

# Israel's Devotion to Idols 44:15-19



*Their attitude is similar to that of the Israelites who left Egypt under Moses' leadership. As soon as they faced any difficulty, they recalled all the good things that they had had in Egypt. They even began to forget that they had been slaves in Egypt ...*

*– Issiaka Coulibaly, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, FATEAC, Ivory Coast*

# Israel's Devotion to Idols 44:15-19



*Now their descendants who have returned to Egypt are behaving in exactly the same way. They regret having abandoned their idolatrous practices. They think that it was these idols that provided for their needs.*

*– Issiaka Coulibaly, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, FATEAC, Ivory Coast*

# Israel's Devotion to Idols 44:15-19

Idolatry is deceptive.

# Further Thoughts on Idolatry

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Idolatry is addictive.

# Further Thoughts on Idolatry

## Colossians 3:5 (ESV)

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

# Further Thoughts on Idolatry

*If your only goal is to become rich,  
you'll never achieve it.*

*– John D. Rockefeller (1839 – 1937)*

*America's first billionaire*

*(This may be the original quotation behind  
the “Just a little bit more,” or “One more  
dollar,” ideas.)*



# Further Thoughts on Idolatry

- **Idolatry is addictive** – we see this all the time.
- If a person makes something their god, they never get enough of it.
- Money, sex, power, pleasure, simple self-centeredness – they all have the power to pull a person along indefinitely.

# Further Thoughts on Idolatry

Idolatry is destructive.

# Further Thoughts on Idolatry

## Romans 1:21-23 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

# Further Thoughts on Idolatry

## Psalm 115:7-9 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

<sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but do not speak;  
eyes, but do not see.

<sup>6</sup> They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell.

<sup>7</sup> They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk;  
and they do not make a sound in their throat.

<sup>8</sup> Those who make them become like them;  
so do all who trust in them.

# Further Thoughts on Idolatry

## Psalm 135:15-18 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> The idols of the nations are silver and gold,  
the work of human hands.

<sup>16</sup> They have mouths, but do not speak;  
they have eyes, but do not see;

<sup>17</sup> they have ears, but do not hear,  
nor is there any breath in their mouths.

<sup>18</sup> Those who make them become like them,  
so do all who trust in them.

Idolatry    Conclusions

# Idolatry Conclusions

## Exodus 20:2-5 (ESV)

And God spoke all these words, saying,

<sup>2</sup> “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

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# Idolatry    Conclusions

- Why would God so detest idolatry – so badly as to make it the first of the Ten Commandments?

# Idolatry    Conclusions

- Idolatry begins with the rejection of God. (Who is, in the end, our only hope.)

# Idolatry    Conclusions



*There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done."*

*All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. Those who knock it is opened.*

*– C. S. Lewis, in The Great Divorce*

# Idolatry    Conclusions

- Idolatry begins with the rejection of God.
- Idolatry is deceptive.
- Idolatry is addictive
- Idolatry is destructive.

# Idolatry    Conclusions

- If we filtered out everything except **The Most Important Thing** to us, what would be left of us?
- In other words, would there be anything left worth keeping?

# Idolatry Conclusions

## 1 John 5:20-21 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. <sup>21</sup> Little children, keep yourselves from idols.