

AN EPISTLE OF JEREMIAH

CHAPTER 1

A copy of an epistle, which Jeremiah sent unto them which were to be led captives into Babylon by the king of the Babylonians, to certify them, as it was commanded him of God.

¹Because of the sins which ye have committed before God, ye shall be led away captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of the Babylonians. ²So when ye be come unto Babylon, ye shall remain there many years, and for a long season, unto seven generations: and after that I will bring you away peaceably from thence. ³Now ye shall see in Babylon gods of silver, and of gold, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, which cause the nations to fear. ⁴Beware therefore that ye in no wise be like to strangers, neither be ye reverent of them, ⁵when ye see the multitude before them and behind them, worshipping them. But say ye in your hearts, O Lord, we must worship Thee. ⁶For Mine angel is with you, and he himself careth for your souls. ⁷For their tongue, it is polished by the craftsman, and they themselves are laid over with gold and silver; yet are they but false, and cannot speak. ⁸And taking gold, as it were for a virgin that loveth ornament, they make crowns for the heads of their gods. ⁹Sometimes also the priests convey from their gods gold and silver, and spend it upon themselves. ¹⁰Yea, they will give thereof to the harlots at the brothel: and they deck them as men with garments, *being* gods of silver, and gods of gold, and wood; yet cannot these gods save themselves from rust and corruption. ¹¹When they are clothed with purple raiment, they wipe their faces because of the dust of the temple, the which is rather much upon them. ¹²And he that cannot put to death one that offendeth him holdeth a sceptre, as though he were a judge of the country. ¹³He hath also in his right hand a dagger and an axe: but he cannot deliver himself from war and thieves. ¹⁴Whereby they are known not to be gods; wherefore fear them not. ¹⁵For like as a vessel that a man useth is nothing worth when it is broken; even so it is with their gods, when they be set up in their houses. ¹⁶Their eyes be full of dust through the feet of them that come in. ¹⁷And as the courtyards are made sure on every side upon him that offendeth the king, as being committed to suffer death; even so the priests make fast their temples with doors, with locks, and bars, lest their gods be spoiled with robbers. ¹⁸They light them lamps, yea, more than for themselves, none of which they can see. ¹⁹They are as one of the beams of the house, yet they say their hearts are gnawed upon by things creeping out of the earth; and when they eat them and their clothes, they feel it not. ²⁰Their faces are blacked through the smoke that cometh out of the house. ²¹Upon their bodies and heads sit bats, swallows, and birds, and the cats also. ²²By this ye may know that they are no gods: therefore fear them not. ²³Notwithstanding the gold which they wear for beauty, except one wipe off the rust, they will not shine: for neither when they were cast did they feel it. ²⁴The things wherein there is

no breath are bought for a most high price. ²⁵They are borne upon shoulders, having no feet, whereby they declare unto men that they be nothing worth. They also that serve them are ashamed: ²⁶for if they fall to the ground at any time, they that worship must set them up again. They neither move of themselves, if one set them upright, nor, if they fall, can they make themselves straight: but they are set gifts before them, as unto dead men. ²⁷As for the sacrifices that are sacrificed unto them, their priests sell and use the money for themselves; in like manner their wives lay up part thereof in salt; but unto the poor and impotent they give nothing of it. ²⁸Menstruous women and women in childbed touch their sacrifices. Since by these things ye may know that they are no gods, fear them not. ²⁹For how can they be called gods? Women set meat before gods of silver, gold, and wood; ³⁰and the priests sit in their temples, having their clothes rent, and their heads and beards shaven, and nothing upon their heads. ³¹They roar and cry before their gods, as men do at the feast when one is dead. ³²The priests also take off their garments, and clothe their wives and children. ³³Whether it be evil that one doeth unto them, or good, they are not able to recompense it: they can neither set up a king, nor put him down. ³⁴In like manner, they can neither give riches nor money; though a man make a vow unto them, and keep it not, they will not require it. ³⁵They can save no man from death, neither deliver the weak from the mighty. ³⁶They cannot restore a blind man to his sight, nor help any man in his distress. ³⁷They can shew no mercy to the widow, nor do good to the fatherless. ³⁸These things of wood, and which are overlaid with gold and silver, are like the stones that be hewn out of the mountain: they that worship them shall be put to shame. ³⁹How then should a man then think and say that they are gods? ⁴⁰Even the Chaldeans themselves dishonour them; for when they shall see one dumb that cannot speak, they bring him, and intreat Bel that he may speak, as though he were able to understand: ⁴¹yet they cannot understand this themselves, and leave them: for they have no knowledge. ⁴²The women also with cords about them, sitting in the ways, burn bran for incense: ⁴³but when one of them is drawn by some that passeth by, that lieth with her, she reproacheth her fellow, that she was not thought as worthy as herself, nor her cord broken. ⁴⁴Whatsoever is done among them is false: how may it then be thought or said that they are gods? ⁴⁵They are made of carpenters and goldsmiths: they can be nothing else than the workman will have them to be. ⁴⁶And they themselves that made them can never live long; how should then the things that are made of them be gods? ⁴⁷For they left lies and reproaches to them that come after. ⁴⁸For when there cometh war or plague upon them, the priests consult with themselves, where they may hide them with them. ⁴⁹How then cannot men perceive that they be no gods, which can neither save themselves from war, nor from plague? ⁵⁰For seeing they be but of wood, and overlaid with silver and gold, it shall be known hereafter that they are false: and it shall manifestly appear to all nations and kings that they are no gods, but the works of men's hands, and that there is no work of God in them. ⁵¹Who then may not know that they are no gods? ⁵²For neither can they set up a king in

the land, nor give rain unto them. ⁵³Neither can they judge their own cause, nor redress a wrong, being unable: for they are as crows between heaven and earth. ⁵⁴For when fire falleth upon the house of gods of wood, or laid over with gold or silver, their priests will flee away, and escape: but they themselves shall be burned asunder like beams. ⁵⁵Moreover they cannot withstand any king or enemies: ⁵⁶how can it then be thought or said that they be gods? ⁵⁷Neither are those gods of wood, and laid over with silver and gold, able to escape either from thieves or robbers. Whose gold, and silver, and garments wherewith they are clothed, they that are strong do take, and go away withal: neither are they able to help themselves. ⁵⁸Therefore it is better to be a king that sheweth his power, or else a profitable vessels in an house, which the owner shall have use of, than such false gods; or to be a door in an house, to keep such things safe as be therein, than such false gods; or a pillar of wood in a palace, than such false gods. ⁵⁹For sun, moon, and stars, being bright, and sent to do their offices, are obedient. ⁶⁰In like manner the lightning when it breaketh forth is easy to be seen: and after the same manner the wind bloweth in every country. ⁶¹And when God commandeth the clouds to go over the whole world, they do as they are bidden. And the fire sent from above to consume hills and woods doeth as it is commanded: ⁶²but these are like unto them neither in shew nor power. ⁶³Wherefore one should neither suppose nor say that they are gods, seeing they are able neither to judge causes, nor to do good unto men. ⁶⁴Since ye know therefore that they are no gods, fear them not. ⁶⁵For they can neither curse nor bless kings: ⁶⁶neither can they shew signs in the heavens among the nations, nor shine as the son, nor give light as the moon. ⁶⁷The beasts are better than they: for they can get them to a covert, and help themselves. ⁶⁸It is then by no means manifest unto us that they are gods: therefore fear them not. ⁶⁹For as a scarecrow in a garden of cucumbers keepeth nothing: so are their gods of wood, and laid over with silver and gold. ⁷⁰And likewise their gods of wood, and laid over with silver and gold, are like to a white thorn in an orchard, that every bird sitteth upon; as also to a dead body, that is cast into the dark. ⁷¹And ye shall know them to be no gods by the bright purple that rotteth upon them: and they themselves afterward shall be eaten, and shall be a reproach in the country. ⁷³Better therefore is the just man that hath no idols: for he shall be far from reproach.