***Jeremiah 10:1-13 Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel. 2Thus says the Lord: “Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven,  
For the Gentiles are dismayed at them. 3For the customs of the peoples are futile; For one cuts a tree from the forest, The work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. 4They decorate it with silver and gold; They fasten it with nails and hammers So that it will not topple. 5They are upright, like a palm tree, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, For they cannot do evil, Nor can they do any good.” 6Inasmuch as there is none like You, O Lord (You are great, and Your name is great in might), 7Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You. 8But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine.  
9Silver is beaten into plates; It is brought from Tarshish, And gold from Uphaz, The work of the craftsman And of the hands of the metalsmith; Blue and purple are their clothing; They are all the work of skillful men. 10But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation. 11Thus you shall say to them: “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.” 12He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, And has stretched out the heavens at His discretion. 13When He utters His voice, There is a multitude of waters in the heavens: “And He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, He brings the wind out of His treasuries***

We’re back with Jeremiah this evening in much the same place as we left off last week. The opening verses of chapter ten are a continuation of the warnings that were given in chapter nine. God gives warning after warning, but is being ignored. He will not be ignored much longer.

Verses 1-2 *Hear the word which the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel. 2Thus says the Lord: “Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven,  
For the Gentiles are dismayed at them.* Jeremiah starts with Hear the word. This is the word that God is speaking and Jeremiah is exhorting the people to listen. In the previous chapter, God placed Judah in with the heathen nations, placing them squarely between Egypt and Edom. The punishment coming upon Judah will be without distinction from the other heathen nations. The only hope that the people have is to put off their sin and idolatries and turn back to God. Complete repentance will stay God’s vengeance. They must not learn and follow the way of their heathen neighbors. Learn not religion, manner, or customs of the people. And do not be dismayed at the signs of the heavens. The Babylonians and the Chaldeans were very well versed in astrology. Decisions were made using the astrological signs and movements of planets and other heavenly bodies. They credited things that happened in life to the influence of the stars.

Verses 3-5 *For the customs of the peoples are futile; For one cuts a tree from the forest, The work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. 4They decorate it with silver and gold; They fasten it with nails and hammers So that it will not topple. 5They are upright, like a palm tree, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, For they cannot do evil, Nor can they do any good.”* In these verses, the making of idols is being described. It is sheer foolishness to worship what is made by human hands. One cuts the tree, work it by hand, decorate it, and nail it in place… then fall on their knees and worship it! Futile and foolish. They stand there, nailed upright, like the trunk of a palm tree. They cannot go, breathe, or speak. They can do neither evil nor good, but are inanimate objects. They can do no harm actively, but do great harm in what they represent. The false gods can do no harm, while God has the ability to both reward and punish. These verses draw us into the next verses by drawing a sharp line between the idols and the one True God.

Verses 6-7 *Inasmuch as there is none like You, O Lord (You are great, and Your name is great in might), 7Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You.*

Jeremiah now continues in these verses the sharp line drawn in the previous. O God, there is none like You. Who is foolish enough not to reverence and fear You? You are King of all the earth. Wise men and wise nations realize that there is no wisdom without God. There is none like Him in all the earth. One of my favorite Christmas sayings is – Wise men seek Him still. When we are wise, we seek Him with our whole hearts.

Verse 8 *But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine.* All images and idols are altogether foolish. And the people making the idols or bowing down to them are likewise foolish. Psalm 115:8, speaking of the people who make the idols says this – *Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.* We see many people today trusting in things foolishly. The wooden idol is worthless and, thereby, the trust placed in this idol is worthless as well. The point that Jeremiah is making is not about the wood, but the unprofitability of people trusting in that which will not last.

Verse 9 *Silver is beaten into plates; It is brought from Tarshish, And gold from Uphaz, The work of the craftsman And of the hands of the metalsmith; Blue and purple are their clothing; They are all the work of skillful men.* In Judah and Israel, there was a practice of making silver plates, almost like a silver foil, and covering the idols with this silver. The silver came from Tarshish, which is a port in Spain. We know that the people of Tyre and Sidon traded with Tarshish. Of course, we remember that Tarshish is the place that Jonah was heading to hide from the Lord. Gold imported from ports in India, Uphaz or Ophir. This gold was crafted by metalsmiths into a similar foil and used in much the same way as silver. Blue and purple clothing was the sign of great wealth and importance. The more richly colored cloth, the more noticed and wealthy the owner. Having the ability to dye cloth with colors such as these was a skill in great demand.

Verse 10 *But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.* But Jehovah is the true God, the One and Only True God. Jeremiah now redraws the line between the false gods and the One True God. The images are dead and senseless, God is the giver of life, so intimately aware of us that He knows the hairs on our heads. He is the author of life and gave breath to every living thing. He is the everlasting King of all creation. No king and no nation can stand in the face of His wrath. Even all nations standing together cannot endure His indignation and wrath.

Verse 11 *Thus you shall say to them: “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.”* In the earliest manuscripts, this verse is written in the Chaldee language. Jeremiah may have spoken it this way to demonstrate to the Jewish people that they will be answering in a foreign language to foreign gods. They will be living among the heathen as captives. The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth and therefore are no gods at all, but imposters stealing honor from God. Their memory shall perish from the earth, just as the materials they are made from. No one remembers Anu or Marduk or Nabu anymore. Their memory perished with the dying of Babylon.

Verse 12-13 *He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, And has stretched out the heavens at His discretion. 13When He utters His voice, There is a multitude of waters in the heavens: “And He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, He brings the wind out of His treasuries.”* Now Jeremiah turns back to the One true God. He made the earth by His power, established the world by His wisdom. Jeremiah is describing God’s preeminence, His power, His infinite wisdom and goodness. He creates with an utterance. He speaks everything into existence. Job 38:4 God asks Job - *Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.* At God’s voice, the skies rain. He brings the vapor back to refill the clouds. He causes lightning and brings wind from out of His treasuries. All of this description brings to mind Job 38. God is in control of it all. We remember that Elijah prayed for the skies to be shut and God shut them. God can use nature to execute His wrath. He is all powerful, not dull and lifeless as the false gods the Jewish people were chasing.

And so, we will leave Jeremiah this evening. God continues to warn. The people continue to ignore. The wrath continues to build, and the Babylonians continue to advance. Judgement is coming, but the people of Jerusalem continue to place false trust in things and idols, not in God Who can save. May we be sure to place our faith firmly in God, the provider of our salvation, during these times when wrath is building, and the evil seems to be advancing.