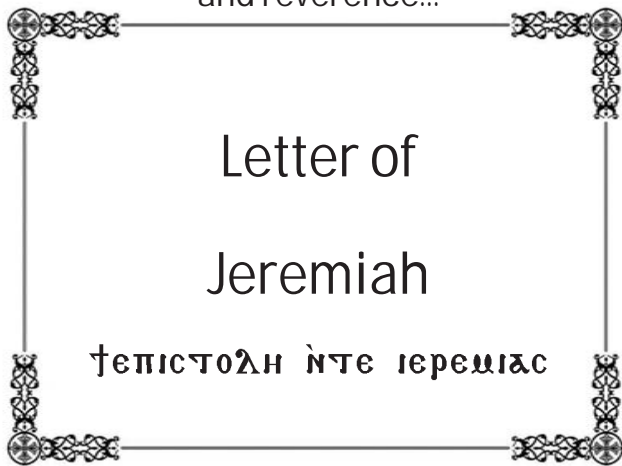




against them.

Jeremiah tells his children to hold to their beliefs for those idols can not heal people and their priests steal from their own people to live a lavish life. May the Lord teach us through this Holy Book that we should always heed His Word. Also through times of troubles and tribulations that it is only through His name that we should offer prayer and fasting to as well as repentance and confession, for He is the only one that can save and help us in everything and Glory be to God forever, Amen.

Held today with equal sacredness
and reverence...



“Against Idol Worship”

A Might Arrow
St. Mary, Roswell, GA

These seventy-three verses purport to be a letter composed by Jeremiah for those about to be taken into exile from Judah to Babylonia in 597 BC by Nebuchadnezzar's forces. It was undoubtedly inspired by Jeremiah's letter (Jer 29.1-23) to those taken hostage in 597, a decade before the final defeat of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Letter of Jeremiah is an impassioned sermon against idol worship and polytheism based on Jer 10, and particularly Jer 10.11: **“The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”** The Letter is also influenced, however, by other Biblical polemics against idol worship (Ps 115.4-8; 135.15-18; Isa 40.18.20; 41.6-7; 44.9-20; 46.1-7; etc.). The body of the letter is composed of a series of ten warnings to Jews, who might be attracted to idol worship, to recognize and be wary of idolatry. Each part ends on a common refrain, with variations, insisting that idols are not gods nor

to be confused with the one, true God (vv. 16, 23, 29, 40, 44, 52, 56, 65, 69, 72).

Although all surviving manuscripts of the letter are in Greek, including one fragment from Cave 7 at Qumran, the Letter was probably composed originally in Hebrew or Aramaic. Most scholars date the Letter to the Hellenistic period. The reference in v. 3 to an exile lasting seven generations has been taken as a clue to the date of composition of the letter (317 BC), but the reference to seven generations is probably symbolic. The allusion to the Letter in 2 Macc 2.1-3 would indicate a date no later than the second century BC.

The Letter has different placements in various manuscripts and versions of the Holy Bible. It stands as a discrete work between Lamentations and Ezekiel in two major Greek Septuagint manuscripts (fourth-century Vaticanus and fifth-century Alexandrius), in the Milan Syriac Hexapla, and in Arabic. In other Greek and Syriac manuscripts, and in the Latin version, it appears as the sixth chapter of Baruch. Since it is, however, clearly independent of Baruch, the New Revised Standard Version treats it as a separate book. This pseudepigraphical work was written for a Jewish audience, perhaps in Palestine. It is not included in either the Jewish or Protestant canons, but is included among the Holy Books of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches.

The body of the letter is divided into 12 parts. It begins by introducing this letter from Jeremiah to those who were to be taken as exiles to Babylon by the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, because of their sins. They are told that they will remain exiled in Babylon for up to 7 generations, or 280 years, after which God will bring them away in peace. And during this time they will encounter **“gods made of silver and gold and wood”** (4) in which they must resist in their heart and know that they are false. **“For my angel is with you, and he is watching over your lives”** (7).

The Letter goes on to **condemn the worship and creation of idols**. They're described as dolls decorated with gold, silver, and purple robes yet **“cannot save themselves from rust and corrosion”** (12). They hold scepters and daggers but cannot judge or defend. **“From this it is evident that they are not gods; so do not fear them”** (16). The **helplessness of the idols** is portrayed when they are locked up in temples to protect them from thievery and their images are blackened by the smoke of the temple.

The people are then reminded that the **idols are unable to feel or move**. **“It will not shine unless someone whips off the tarnish”** (24) and **“if it is tipped over, it cannot**



straighten itself" (27). Reassurance is offered at the end of the section again; *"since you know by these things that they are not gods, do not fear them"* (29).

Idols cannot repay good or evil, or help worshipers. Their followers serve them meals and sit in their temples with torn clothes, yet they do not respond. *"They cannot save anyone from death or rescue the weak from the strong. They cannot restore sight to the blind; they cannot rescue one who is in distress"* (36-37). A result to those who make and serve these gods will be one of shame.

Chaldeans, those who worship these idols, bring *dishonor to their idols*. They're humiliated when they bring the mute idols to heal those who cannot speak or pray as if stones are able to understand. These *idols are but the work of human hands*. They are made as the worshiper wishes his god to be. Often times the god does not live as long as the man that created it! The *impotence of the idols* is evident in their lack of power. They cannot control nature, judge the wicked, or flee from their temples when a fire breaks.

The Letter final explains that the *idols are helpless, useless, and not to be compared with celestial phenomena*. *"So it is better to be a king who shows his courage, or a household utensil that serves its owner's need, than to be these false gods; better even the door of a house that protects its contents, than these false gods; better also a wooden pillar in a palace, than these false gods"* (59). When the One True God commands the sun, the moon, and the stars they obey. He commands when and where the lightning strikes and flashes; where the wind blows and the fire consumes...these gods shall never compare to the One who has power over the world. The wild animals are better than these idols, for they can at least flee when they are in danger.

The Letter concludes *comparing the false idols to scarecrows, thorn bushes, and corpses*. They guard nothing, provide nothing, and will be thrown out in darkness.

Held today with equal sacredness
and reverence...



This prayer and song is included in the Holy Book of Daniel and resumes the remainder of the story of the three Jewish youth thrown into the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar. In the Greek text (Septuagint) Abednego retains his original name, Azariah. Praying for deliverance Azariah summons forth an Angel of the Lord, *"the Angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions..."* (Prayer of Azariah 26) The angel extinguishes the flames of the furnace and the three Holy Youth sing praise to God.

Held today with equal sacredness
and reverence...



This story is included in the Holy Book of Daniel and centers on a beautiful married woman. Two elders told Susanna that unless she commits adultery with them they would publicly tell others that she had done so with a young man. *"...The two elders, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death."* (Susanna 28)