

# Who Were the **PROPHETS?**

Lesson 3 • September 18  
Prosecutors of Idolatry

Hear what the LORD says... Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel. (*Mic 6:1-2*)

The LORD had clearly communicated the terms of his covenant with Israel. At the foundation of that covenant? “You shall have no other gods before me” (*Exo 20:3*). And yet, in the days of the kings of Israel and Judah, “their land [was] filled with idols” and people were bowing down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers had made (*Isa 2:8*)

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image” was the command of the LORD (*Exo 20:4*), and the children of Israel had agreed. But listen to how the prophet Habakkuk described the sad situation:

“What profit is an idol  
when its maker has shaped it,  
a metal image, a teacher of lies?  
For its maker trusts in his own creation  
when he makes speechless idols!  
Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake;  
to a silent stone, Arise!  
Can this teach?  
Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,  
and there is no breath at all in it.” (*Hab 2:18-19*)

Idolatry is serious because idols are “worthless.” That’s the word the prophet Jeremiah used:

...every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols,  
for his images are false,  
and there is no breath in them.  
They are worthless, a work of delusion;  
at the time of their punishment they shall perish.  
Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob,  
for he is the one who formed all things,  
and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance;  
the LORD of hosts is his name. (*Jer 51:17-19*)



Idolatry is serious because God had told Israel from the very beginning of their covenant, “I the LORD your God am a jealous God” (*Exo 20:5*). But in the days of Israel’s kings, God’s people had turned their backs on God. “Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd” (*Zech 10:2*). God used his prophets to warn people then ... and now. Let’s talk about it.

## For Class & Family Discussion:

- Why wouldn't the LORD just leave the people alone and let them do what they wanted to do? Why do you think the LORD felt the need to "contend with Israel" ([Mic 6:1-2](#))?
  
- Why do you think Jeremiah described idols as "worthless, a work of delusion" ([51:18](#))?
  
- Let's turn our Bibles back to [Isaiah 44:12-20](#) and read it together. What stands out to you from this sad description of how much God's people had forgotten and how far they had wandered away from him?
  
- Let's turn our Bibles back to [1 John 5:21](#)—the very last verse in [1 John](#)—and read it together. Why do you think John would write that to Christians, many years after those kings of Israel and Judah who made such a mess of things?
  
- Do we still struggle with idolatry today? If so, in your own words, what is an idol? What sort of idols might be very dangerous for us, even today?
  
- Notice how the apostle Paul contrasts idols with God in [1 Thessalonians 1:9-10](#). What makes God different? What has God done that an idol cannot do?
  
- Why do you think God would describe himself in [Exodus 20:5](#) as "a jealous God"? We usually think of jealousy as a bad thing, so can it somehow be a good thing? If so, in what way?
  
- We heard the prophet Zechariah describing God's people as "wandering like sheep" and being "afflicted for lack of a shepherd" ([10:2](#)). How does idolatry make people "wander" and lose their connection to God as the good "shepherd"?