

Jeremiah 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

Analysis

God's rhetorical question makes the accusation explicit: "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." The question expects negative answer—nations don't change their gods. The phrase "which are yet no gods" (vehem lo elohim, וְהָם לֹא אֱלֹהִים) reveals these deities' non-existence—they aren't gods at all. Yet pagans remain loyal to nothing, while Israel abandoned "their glory" (kevodoh, כְּבוֹד)—a term referring to God Himself (Psalm 106:20 uses similar language for golden calf incident). God is Israel's glory, honor, and weightiness (kavod, כְּבוֹד means weight, glory, honor). They exchanged this for "that which doth not profit" (belo yoil, בְּלוּאֵל)—worthless idols offering no benefit. The trade is absurd: infinite glory for empty nothingness. This verse captures the essence of all sin—exchanging God's glory for substitutes that cannot satisfy (Romans 1:23, 25 makes similar accusation against humanity generally).

Historical Context

This verse crystallizes Israel's fundamental apostasy across their history. The golden calf incident (Exodus 32) set the pattern—exchanging "their glory" for an ox image, as Psalm 106:20 notes. Throughout Judges and the monarchy, Israel repeatedly adopted Canaanite Baalism, Asherah worship, Molech child sacrifice, and other pagan practices. What makes this trade so irrational is what they abandoned: they had witnessed plagues on Egypt, Red Sea parting, Sinai

theophany, wilderness provision, Jericho's fall, and centuries of covenant faithfulness. Yet they abandoned this demonstrated reality for Baal—a storm god who couldn't provide rain when Yahweh shut the heavens (1 Kings 17-18). Archaeol evidence shows syncretism at every level—figurines in homes, compromised altars, inscriptions combining Yahweh with pagan elements. Paul uses similar logic in Romans 1:18-25, noting how humanity exchanged God's glory for created things, worshipping creation rather than Creator. The pattern continues: believers today exchange God's glory for career success, material prosperity, sexual pleasure, human approval—worthless substitutes incapable of satisfying souls.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What "glories" (worthless substitutes) do modern believers sometimes exchange for God Himself—what are our functional idols?
2. How does recognizing that even false gods inspire more loyalty than Israel showed to Yahweh convict us of taking God's grace for granted?

Interlinear Text

הָמְרָא	גּוֹי	אֱלֹהִים	לֹא	וְהַמָּה	אֱלֹהִים	רָא	הָמְרָא
have changed	Hath a nation	their gods					their gods
H4171	H1471	H430					H430
וְעַמְּךָ	הָמְרָא	כִּבְדָּל	בְּלֹא	כִּבְדָּל	זָהָב	וְעַמְּךָ	זָהָב
but my people	have changed	their glory					for that which doth not profit
H5971	H4171	H3519					H3276

Additional Cross-References

Romans 1:23 (Glory): And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Isaiah 37:19 (References God): And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

Psalms 106:20 (Glory): Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

Jeremiah 16:20 (References God): Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?

Micah 4:5 (References God): For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

Psalms 115:4 (Parallel theme): Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

Jeremiah 2:5 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

Jeremiah 2:8 (Parallel theme): The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

1 Corinthians 8:4 (References God): As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.