

# THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK

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Jeremiah's America - # 3

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SUBJECT: APOSTASY

TITLE: UNFAITHFUL AND TREACHEROUS

TEXT: JEREMIAH 3:3; 6-13

INTRODUCTION. *“You have the brazen look of a prostitute and refuse to be ashamed”* (Jer 3:3, HCSB). That is what God had to say to his Chosen People! Listen to what He says again: *“You have the brazen look of a prostitute and refuse to be ashamed.”* With these words, God indicts Judah for the two evils He has mentioned in 2:16: “Forsaking the fountain of living waters and hewing for them selves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” They had deliberately forsaken the Lord and they had chosen to worship false gods - God calls that spiritual adultery, fornication. They were caught in the act!

## I. WE ARE GOING COMPARE AMERICA WITH ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

### A. Israel Had Been Judged Because of Their Rebellion Against the Lord.

Israel, the northern ten tribes, had been judged and destroyed for the sins of idolatry, immorality, greed, violence, and abuse of the poor. Amos and Hosea, during the Golden Age of Prophecy, the Eighth Century B. C., had been sent by the Lord to warn Israel that judgment was coming if they did not repent. Yahweh God appealed to them to repent but when they persisted in their rebellion He finally reached the point that He commanded, “Prepare to meet thy God.” They had waited too late.

In 734 B.C., Assyria defeated the combined forces of Syria and Israel in what we call the Syro-Ephriamitic Crisis (Ephraim being the dominant tribe, was often used of the whole nation). When Israel created problems for Assyria, Sargon II came again in 722 B. C. and mercilessly defeated the Israelites and took large numbers from the land and scattered them among the nations of the region. They then moved foreigners into the land to replace those who have been deported. By the way, these people were also Semitic people, Semitic but pagan. In time the Jews who remained in the land intermarried with those foreigners. Their descendants were the Samaritans of Jesus' day.

### B. Judah Knew Exactly Why Israel Had Been Destroyed.

The Lord had sent Amos and Hosea to warn Israel of the coming judgment and he sent Isaiah and Micah to warn Judah, the southern kingdom, that if they did not repent He would use those same Assyrians would judge them. Judah would not be destroyed, but if they persisted in their rebellion He would raise up the Babylonians to take them into captivity for seventy years.

They were warned over and over that God demanded repentance. Instead, they stubbornly faced Him with the brazen look of a prostitute who has been caught in the act but refuses to acknowledge that she has done anything wrong. Even though Judah knew what had happened to Israel, and why, she still refused to repent. Judah, unlike Israel, had been led by some godly kings. In fact, there was a major revival under Hezekiah and a lesser one under Josiah, but the people quickly returned to their false gods. Manasseh spread evil like one sowing wheat, and according to tradition, when Isaiah stood up for the Lord the king had him stuffed into a hollow log and sawn asunder. If true, that would have been around 698 B. C. By 625, Judah was filled with the same sins and the same rebellious spirit Israel had shown over a century earlier.

God blessed Judah with a godly king - In Sunday School we called him Good King Josiah. He was the king who used the Word of God to bring revival to the land, a revival that was cut short when he was killed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt on the Plains of Megiddo in 608 B.C. The Lord had called Jeremiah to warn Judah that they must repent or be taken into captivity in Babylon. In fact, the Lord told Jeremiah that the coming judgment was going to be so severe that he should not get married because he would never want a family to go through what he would be facing, or what Judah would face.

Judah was guilty of the same sins as Israel, but they were more guilty than they because they had sinned against a greater light, and against more specific warnings. Now let us read what the Lord has to say:

“In the days of King Josiah the Lord asked me, **““Have you seen what unfaithful Israel has done?** She has ascended every high hill and gone under every green tree to prostitute herself there. I thought: After she has done all these things, she will return to Me. But she didn’t return, and **her treacherous sister Judah saw it.** I observed that it was because unfaithful Israel had committed adultery that I had sent her away and had given her a certificate of divorce. **Nevertheless, her treacherous sister Judah was not afraid but also went and prostituted herself.** Indifferent to her prostitution, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and tree. **Yet in spite of all this, her treacherous sister Judah didn’t return to Me with all her heart—only in pretense.”** [This is] the Lord’s declaration. The Lord announced to me, **““Unfaithful Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah”** (Jer 3:6-11, HCSB, emphasis added).

You would think this message would have brought Judah to her knees. How do they get to the point that they could hear such a message and not repent? Well, let’s hold that question until we apply it to our day and our nation. Why do so many Americans persist in rebellion against God?

### C. America Knows What Happened to Israel and Judah, and Why.

How did Judah get that way? Perhaps the question we should be asking is how did America get to the point that she is waging a war against God? If you have any doubt about this you need to read

David Limbaugh's book, PERSECUTION: HOW LIBERALS ARE WAGING WAR AGAINST CHRISTIANITY. Fox News, during the 2003 Christmas season, took a close look at the war being waged against Christianity people like the ACLU and other liberal groups. Cities and officials are being sued for allowing Nativity scenes on public property. The former Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme court, Roy Moore has paid a tremendous price for erecting a display of the Ten Commandments. The judge who ruled against him has a statue of a pagan god in his court room when he handed down the decision - and the Supreme Court which refused to give Judge Moore a hearing has a display of the Ten Commandments posted in the Supreme Court foyer. How did we get this way?

How did we get to the point that we have teachers in public school playing Big Brother and reporting any symbol or expression of Christianity. How did we get to the point that children have been suspended from school for wearing a cross, carrying a Bible (all of which are legal) or speaking of their faith to a friend? We have come a long way from the time my English teacher shared her experience the first day of my Junior year in high school at Sledge, MS. Miss Hicks told us that she had attended Youth Week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center and the theme for the week was GOD HAS A PLAN, A PLACE, AND A PURPOSE FOR EVERY LIFE. The following June she invited three students to go with her to youth week at Ridgecrest. I was one of those young people and it was one of the highlights of my life at the time.

How did we get to the point where millions of Americans would vote for a grossly immoral man to serve as president of the United States. You remember the attitude, "It was just sex!" Liberals dismissed the most horrible and disgusting behavior former president Bill Clinton. Many of the talking heads on TV justified Clinton's immorality with the claim that he was no worse than some other president. If he could have run again millions would have voted for him.

John F. Kennedy is still one of the most popular presidents ever, yet he was grossly immoral. One difference is that the media did not report Kennedy's immorality until later. They seemed reluctant to report what we learned later that they knew about Clinton until a London paper broke the news, and then the American media reported it, often giving it one spin or another - "Whatever he does in his private life is nobody's business but his."

This is not the America the Founders envisioned. This is not the America George Washington, John Witherspoon, James Madison, John Adams, envisioned. It is not the America of whom a French historian said, "America is great because she is good, and she ceases to be good she will cease to be great." This is not the America of my childhood and sadly, my little granddaughter Abigail will never even comprehend the America in which I grew up. Just as sadly, I was totally ignorant of the changes that were taking place when I was growing up, believing we were so close to another great awakening in America. What is even sadder is the fact that the fall may be laid right in front of the church, or possibly in front of the pulpit and the Christians professor's desk. No, this is not the America in which I grew up.

This is not the America that adopted a constitution based on the Word of God - and don't let anyone

tell you that America was never a Christian nation! America has never been a theocracy, and was never intended to be one, but the consensus was definitely Christian. Sadly, a lot of letters are written to the editor of local newspapers by people who seek to set the historical record state about the founders, letters written by people who are totally ignorant of the writings of the founders themselves. We do not have to speculate because we have their testimonies. Check out David Barton and the WALL BUILDERS if you want to know what they were thinking. I checked yesterday with the manager of a Christian book stores (owned by one of the leading chains in America) and they do not carry any of David Barton's books and had nothing on the Founding Fathers. But, he can order them. Go to the Internet and you will find them. David Barton appears regularly with AFR Radio managers in World-view Week-end conferences. You may want to watch for one of those conferences.

When I was growing up in the Mississippi Delta, it never occurred to me to question why even lost people I knew wanted this nation of honor the laws and standards of the Bible. They might confess to breaking some of those laws but they were convinced that those principles were best for our country. They were not Christians but they had been taught by Christians at home and at school.

William Bennett has published a moral index that shows a sharp increase in sinful activity over a period of some forty years. The line on his chart made a sharp upward turn about the time prayer and Bible reading were taken out of public schools, but the seed of apostasy had been planted many years earlier.

America, following England, rejected the Creator and embraced godless evolution. It amazes me that you cannot get many people today to see what a treacherous move that was - and is. If you want to sell people on abortion, sell them first on evolution. If you want to sell them on euthanasia, sell them first on evolution. If you want to sell them on genetic engineering, sell them first on evolution. If you want to sell them on homosexuality, sell them first on evolution. Let me stress this - all evolutionists are not immoral or insensitive, and all evolutionists do not kill unborn (or partially born) babies. At the same time, evolution will prepare the heart for those things. If you did not come from God you will not have to stand before Him to give an account. If you do not have a Creator how could you be held accountable for sin. If there is not sin you need no Savior.

America's rebellion today reminds me of the attitude of ancient Israel and Judah. In fact, I see America every time I read the Book of Jeremiah. When an evangelical preacher or lay person tries to confront America with her sin they are often attacked with "righteous" indignation. Anita Bryant paid dearly for her stand on moral issues. Franklin Graham has been roundly criticized, even by those who profess to be Christians for drawing a line of distinction between Christianity and Islam. Former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore was criticized more severely by the Rev. Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State than by many who professed no faith at all.

When America is confronted with her sin what is her response? I am afraid it is much the same as that of ancient Israel, of whom God said, "You have the brazen look of a prostitute and refuse to be ashamed." Let me try to explain why I see a parallel between America and ancient Israel and Judah.

## II. NOW LET US COMPARE THE TREACHERY OF AMERICA, ISRAEL, AND JUDAH.

### A. First, There Is the Rejection of the true God

#### 1. Backsliding Israel had forsaken the Lord.

This was not something one can excuse. They knew their history, the history of the covenant God had made with them. They knew that God had blessed them when they were faithful and judged them when they rebelled. They knew He had been longsuffering in His dealing with them. God had said to them, “Come to Bethel and transgress, At Gilgal multiply transgression...” (Amos 4:4a). Where they should have prayed they played; when they should have worship they transgressed - sinned with their eyes wide open. They could not plead ignorance! The Lord said, “Also I gave you cleanness of teeth (extreme famine) in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; Yet you have not returned to Me,’ Says the LORD” (Amos 4:6). He continually tried to get them to return to Him, but they refused:

“But I gave you also cleanness of teeth in all your cities And lack of bread in all your places, **Yet you have not returned to Me,**” declares the LORD.”

“Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you... I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; **Yet you have not returned to Me,**’ declares the LORD.”

“I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt; I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses, And I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils; **Yet you have not returned to Me,**’ declares the LORD.”

“I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; **Yet you have not returned to Me,**” declares the LORD.”

“**Therefore** thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, **Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.**”

#### 2. Treacherous Judah had forsaken the Lord.

Treacherous Judah knew exactly what God had done to Israel, and why, yet they refused to return to the Lord. There is no way Judah could plead ignorance. Isaiah had warned them, Micah had warned them, and now Jeremiah was warning them. Josiah had put the authority and power of the throne behind an effort to return them to the Lord, but at his death they resumed their rebellion. They persisted in their rebellion against Yahweh, set their minds and hearts on the false gods of greed and corruption, lying and stealing, apostasy and sacrilege. Now they must repent or they would be defeated by the Babylonians, the walls of the city broken, homes burned, people slain, and

the temple would be destroyed. Still, they would not return to Him - and their politicians and preachers were the primary culprits, watering down, disputing, and denying the Word of the Lord.

3. Though America knows what happened to Israel and Judah, she refuses to repent.

Oh yes, I know you may be thinking that America does not know what happened in ancient Israel and Judah. Americans do not know George Washington and James Madison, or John Leland and Obadiah Holmes - but she knows Sting and Paris Hilton. The fact is, America might know if she cared to know. All we have to do is read God's Word, which is available to every American. The ancient Israelites did not have that privilege - they had never even seen a whole Bible, yet they were held accountable. America is committing all the same sins Israel and Judah committed, with far less excuse. We are sinning against a far greater light.

They had Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah - over a period of a century and a half (and they call it the Golden Age of Prophecy!). We have had Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, and thousands of pastors, evangelists and missionaries, yet we refuse to obey the Lord. We have churches, Bibles, radio and television networks, preachers, teachers, schools, and all sorts of aids, yet we are losing our culture. We are on that proverbial slippery slope and we are sliding faster and faster into the abyss of depravity.

B. Second, There Is the Worship of False Gods.

1. Israel continually turned to false gods.

Israel could not plead ignorance when she embraced Baal and all the other pagan gods. They had been warned, they had been taught, they had been punished, but they refused to return to the Lord. Elijah and Elisha could not persuade them to return to the Lord, not could Amos or Hosea. Their rebellion always involved idolatry, spiritual adultery. When they refused to give up their false gods and serve the true God, He had the Assyrians ready to come with their swords and flesh hooks and take them away.

2. Judah had turned to false gods.

The Lord indicted the nation: "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water" (Jer. 2;13). They rejected the true God and turned to false gods - gods who are no gods. They did this with full knowledge of what had happened to Israel. The Lord said, "*You have the brazen look of a prostitute and refuse to be ashamed*" (3:3).

3. America has turned to false gods.

Even though we know what happened to Israel and Judah, America has turned to false gods. If anyone mentions Christmas mentioned on television someone wants to jump in and remind us of

Ramadan or Kwanza. Liberal politicians, the ACLU and other such groups, with their allies in the media are waging an all out war against Christianity. Of course they tell us they have nothing against religion as long as it is practiced at home or in the church. Just don't bring it into the public arena. They cry, "separation of church and state" so often that most Americans are blinded to what the amendment really says. Our constitution guarantees that the government will not establish a state religion - and that it will not interfere with the free expression of our faith.

America cannot plead ignorance - only iniquity. The information is there for us. If it is not being taught at home, the parents will be held accountable. If it is not taught at school, the teachers and administration (or politicians) will be held accountable. Those who are working against our Lord are going to stand before him in judgment.

### C. Third, There Is the Immorality.

#### 1. Immorality was a serious sin in Israel.

Their sin was of a particularly heinous nature: "And a man and his father resort to the same girl in order to profane My holy name.... On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined" (Amos 2:6ff). They combined idolatry and adultery.

#### 2. Judah was as guilty as Israel.

If Israel was unfaithful, Judah was treacherous. Israel was more righteous than treacherous Judah because she sinned against a greater light.

#### 3. America has become grossly immoral.

What our forefathers would have called fifth, we now call entertainment. Critics praise those who portray the most shameful behavior in TV and in the movies. Pornography has become a major problem in America - millions, we are told, have become addicted to this horrible and vile evil. People in powerful positions in politics and in the media defend all this, claiming that it is protected by free speech.

America should know better. We have the information and we have God's warnings. If America does not know any better, the blame lies squarely in front of parents, pastors, evangelists, teachers, and all those politicians who run as Christians and then pay lip-service to the Lord. They tell us that people will not come to our services if we preach against sin, so many preachers are serving up exactly what lost people and backsliders are demanding. Well, there were plenty of those preachers around in Jeremiah's day, too.

Jesus asked the Pharisee what they went out to see when they went out to see John the Baptist - "a reed shaken in the wind?" We have too many reeds today, shaken by the wind. If we do not warn

people of the consequences of their sin, they will be destroyed and we are going to have to stand before the Lord and explain why we failed them.

D. Fourth, There Is the Greed.

1. Israel was guilty.

Once again, the Lord says it best:

“Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because **they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals.** These who **pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless** Also turn aside the way of the humble; And a man and his father resort to the same girl In order to profane My holy name. On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined” (Amos 2:6-8).

How low can one get? They had stolen the poor person’s property, but lusted for the dust that settled in his hair!

2. Judah was guilty of the same sin.

There was no middle class, only the very wealthy and the very poor. The poor were at the mercy of the wealthy and powerful. When a people rebels against God, they lose their compassion for the poor.

3. America is guilty.

We may protest if we want to, but we are guilty. We have many government programs to help the poor - but those very programs keep certain people in power. I am amazed at the rich politicians who are continually boasting of what they do for the poor. And make no mistake, some are compassionate, but many are simply playing politics. They condemn the corporations that “cook the books”, but they cook the books politically, giving everything their own spin. Recent reports show a marked improvement in the economy, but a liberal politician goes on a news program and protests that only the wealthy are benefitting from it. Well, if I had seen the way many of the so-called poor people live when I was in the fifth grade I would have thought they were rich. I never heard my parents crying over their misfortune. They accepted the challenge before them with the conviction that they could overcome the circumstances and provide for their family.

America is guilty of greed and all the sins that follow covetousness. People invent new ways every day to steal what someone else has worked to accumulate - identity theft, credit card thefts, con games. The elderly are often prime targets of con-artists, but everyone is at risk. Then there are the lawsuits that are filed for no other purpose than to take away something someone else has worked



for all his life. There are legitimate lawsuits, but there are also frivolous suits, and then there are lawsuits that seem motivated by greed, covetousness, and avarice. Medical offices and clinics, nursing homes, doctors, and various businesses are fighting for survival under the weight of liability insurance premiums.

The wealthy may be in a position to take advantage of the poor, but the poor person may sin in coveting that which belongs to the wealthy person.

CONCLUSION. We could go on and on in our comparison between America and ancient Israel and Judah. The parallels are frightening when we spend some time reading Jeremiah. Israel rebelled, and when God tried to bring them back to Him they refused. Judah knew all of that, yet they refused to return to the Lord. America can read Jeremiah and see how God deals with people. He will bless us when we are faithful, punish us when we are unfaithful, and if He chooses to do so, destroy us when we become treacherous.

I know America does not enjoy the same covenant relationship with the Lord that Judah did, but America has been the center for the spread of the Gospel for generations. Do you really think the Lord is going to give up America without any attempt to turn us back to Him?

I believe we are facing an encounter with Almighty God. We will either meet him in that glorious moment when Jesus returns for His church, or we may meet him in judgment. If so, that judgment will be designed either to punish us or to return us to the Lord. He is a holy God and that is the way He worked in ancient Israel and Judah. His holiness demands action against sin, but His love holds out hope for us.

God will not be deceived by religion. He said, "Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception," declares the LORD" (Jer. 310). God appealed to Judah, "Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness." "Behold, we come to You; For You are the LORD our God" (Jr. 3:22).

With all my heart, I appeal to you to return to the Lord and let him heal your faithlessness. If you deny it, it will not be healed. If you confess it, he will heal you and use you to help spread His message of mercy and grace to others.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

