

# THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

Johnny L. Sanders. D.Min

Jeremiah's America, # 6

---

SUBJECT: JEREMIAH'S AMERICA

TITLE: JEREMIAH'S TV CULTURE

TEXT: JEREMIAH 4:3; 8:20

INTRODUCTION. Brother Alton will be one hundred, one years old in a couple of months. At age ninety-nine he had his driver's license renewed for four years! Right after he turned ninety-nine I watched him drive up to a gate, get out of his truck and climb over the gate and walk down a long hill to check out some Catawba trees for Catawba worms. He was going fishing! A few years ago he told Gene, one of our deacons, that he wanted to talk with him about remedies for various ailments that he wanted someone to know before his death.

Those who know Brother Alton can entertain each other with stories about this very interesting man, but what I would like for you to think with me about today is the man but all the changes this man has witnessed in his lifetime. He was born in 1904, so he witnessed all the wars of the Twentieth Century. He grew up in the horse and buggy era, but witnessed the dawning of the automotive age, the prop-driven airplane, the jet, the rocket age, the computer age, and the space age. To be perfectly honest, he knows next to nothing about the information age or the Internet.

Brother Alton lived through the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, and witnessed the Hippies, the Boomers, and the Busters, but don't ask him about the GenXers. He has witnessed a decline in the work ethic, morals, and common courtesy in America. He has also witnessed modern medical marvels, and scientific wonders.

[NOTE: Alton Biggs died a few months after I wrote this sermon, so he is with his Lord at this time.]

Though it may surprise some young people, I am not as old as Brother Alton. I have, however, witnessed some major changes in America during the last half of Brother Alton's life. I remember every school day beginning with Scripture and prayer. I remember that when either the local Baptist church or the Methodist church had a revival students were given permission to walk into town and attend the morning service. I remember returning to the class and having my teacher ask someone to tell the class about the sermon. I remember the first time that happened and I was surprised to discover that I was the only one with his hand up. I reviewed the story of the Good Samaritan for my class.

I do not remember a time when you could not hear profanity or obscene language at school, at work, on the athletic field, or in other places. But in those days any man who would use such language in the presence of women and children was considered worse than crude. He might also be in need of

medical attention if he did not cease when called down - which he was almost certain to be.

I remember a time when very few businesses were open on Sunday. I also remember that when the blue laws were repealed in Mississippi, my son John, who was a student at Mississippi College, asked his employer at one of the stores in a local mall if they could work their schedule so that he would not have to work on Sunday. They would not do it, so he resigned on the spot. That was not when I was a student at Mississippi College, but when my son was there.

I remember other things, too. I remember my teenage conviction that America was ready for a revival. I remember the 1954 Southern Baptist slogan, A MILLION MORE IN FIFTY FOUR. I remember hearing about the young evangelist that had captured the hearts of America. I could hardly wait to get home from our earlier services and watch R. G. Lee on television, and then after lunch we gathered around the black and white TV and watched Billy Graham.

Television programs were so clean that I never heard of anyone changing channels because of language, nudity, or romantic scenes. Husbands and wives slept in separate beds - if they slept at all. FATHER KNOWS BEST, LEAVE IT TO BEAVER, AND ANDY GRIFFITH managed to leave us with a positive moral lesson. The cowboys waved at the girl, they did not tackle them. The good guys wore white hats. Singers had were mostly covered up, they stayed in the same general area on stage, and you could actually hear the words over the music.

I have seen all of that change - change to the point that people today mock those of us who thought of that as entertainment. LEAVE IT TO BEAVER AND ANDY GRIFFITH gave way to MASH AND ALL IN THE FAMILY. Then, when the industry saw that people accepted the new words and sexually suggestive dialog, they began pushing the envelop - they told us they were simply reflecting society.

Today, I almost never watch a network sitcom - unless it is a rerun of ANDY GRIFFITH or MATLOCK, or some other program which does not push immorality, violence, and vile language. The thing that amazes me is that Christians continue to watch programs that attack their values, and even their Lord. They also support sponsors of those programs. The American Family Association had proved that, while the actors and producers are not concerned with Christian values, their sponsors can be influenced by Christians when they stick together.

Television has not only reflected the values of the viewers, it has led America deeper and deeper into moral depravity. The same actors who campaigning against the pollution of our water and air, arrogantly pollute the airwaves and seduce young minds and hearts for the prince of this world. I remember thinking how fanatical those people were who began calling the television a one-eyed devil. If they could only see it now! In America, through the medium of television, movies, magazines, books, and music has not only led us to the brink of the proverbial slippery slope, it has given us a big shove. Sadly, there is little indication that things are going to get any better any time soon.

As Jeremiah reminded Israel of their godly heritage, and their rebellion against God, I believe we can use the entertainment industry as one indication of our moral decline. And as we look at the evidence, let me ask you to keep one question in mind. Where has the church been in all of this?

## I. BOTH ISRAEL AND AMERICA COULD LOOK BACK TO A GODLY HERITAGE.

### A. Israel Had Once Had a Special Relationship with the Lord.

#### 1. God chose them above all other people.

1) God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to the Promised Land.

2) He made a covenant with Abraham .

That covenant included

(1) descendants no one could number,

(2) a chosen nation, and

(3) a Seed Who would bless the nations (that Seed is Jesus).

3) God miraculously provided a child of promise - Isaac.

4) He continued His covenant through Jacob.

5) He provided for His people for 400 years in Egypt (They grew from 70 to 2 million people).

#### 2. When the Israelites were oppressed God sent Moses to deliver them

1) He heard their cry and sent Moses to demand their release.

2) He used ten plagues to show up the gods of Egypt and force Pharaoh to let them go.

3) The Exodus demonstrated His power, His love, His provision, and His protection.

By His mighty hand He parted the waters of the Red Sea and let them cross on dry land. By His mighty hand He destroyed the Egyptian army when they pursued the Israelites.

4) At Sinai He entered a covenant with them.

They had put God to the test before they entered a covenant relationship with Him.

After He made the covenant with them He commanded them never to put Him to the test again - a command Jesus repeated when tempted by Satan in another wilderness.

5) When they rebelled he judged them severely - yet He sustained the nation.

They refused to enter the Land of Promise and possess their possessions and God's judgment was that they would wander in the wilderness until all those twenty years of age and older were dead, with the exception of the faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb.

4. The Conquest was accomplished by the mighty hand of God.

It was by a mighty act of God that the waters of the Red Sea were parted so that the Children of Israel could cross on dry land. It was also by a mighty act of God that the waters of the Jordan River were parted and the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry land. The Israelites of Jeremiah's day knew all of this - but still refused to obey the Lord.

Egypt symbolized slavery and death. The Israelites were dead to God's ultimate purpose as long as they were in Egypt, and they were not about to leave Egypt until a new Pharaoh began his reign of terror. When they cried out to the Lord He delivered them. Jeremiah's generation knew the story of the Exodus, make no mistake about it.

The wilderness symbolizes the flesh (or the world). God did not deliver them from Egypt to see them flounder in the wilderness forty years. He wanted to take them directly to Sinai where He would make a covenant with them, and then He would lead them into the Land of Promise, the land He had given Abraham five hundred years earlier.

Remember this about the wilderness. The Israelites were not where God wanted them. They were not where they should have been. While they did not have to go back to Egypt (death and slavery), they could not enter the land flowing with milk and honey. What do people do in the wilderness? They wander. They subsist. They also gripe and complain. The Israelites ate manna - not the food of the Land of Promise. It sustained life but never satisfied. The people griped, complained, turned on their leaders, and longed for the life they had known in Egypt, forgetting the torture and death they had left behind.

Canaan symbolizes the spirit-filled life, a life of obedience, hope, and fruitfulness. This is where they were supposed to be. And Jeremiah's Israel well knew it, as had every generation from Joshua to Jeremiah. Yet, it had little impact on their lives.

5. Throughout the Period of the Judges God showed both judgment and mercy.

These people could not plead ignorance. They knew their history. They had been taught from early childhood how the Lord had dealt with His chosen people. He blessed them when they were faithful, but when they rebelled He sent some foreign power to defeat them, to subjugate them and make them

pay tribute. When they repented He sent a deliverer (Samson, Gideon, Deborah) to deliver them. They lived in peace until that deliverer died and then they turned to idols again. The cycle was repeated more than a dozen times - and these people knew it! Yet they continually rebelled against the Lord.

6. During the period of the kings, God often blessed His people.

There were many ungodly kings, but the kingdom was established by a man after God's own heart. David was the standard by which all other kings were judged. Some kings did evil; some did good, though not as faithful as David; and there were the kings like Hezekiah and Josiah who were faithful in all things, just like their father David. Israel today salutes a flag emblazoned with the star of Jeroboam? Rehoboam? Ahab. No! It is the star of David.

When had Israel flourished? During the reign of godly kings. When did they suffer most? During the reign of ungodly kings, like Ahab in the north and Manasseh in the south. These people were well aware of all of this, and so was the kings of Jeremiah's day. And they still turned a deaf ear to the prophet of God.

7. They had a godly heritage.

From the time of the covenant and the conquest, they had seen God bless the nation when they were faithful, and curse the nation when it rebelled against the Lord. Amos proclaims this truth in shocking words. What nation has ever been able to point to such leaders as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. They knew their heritage, but persisted in rebelling against the Lord.

B. Now Consider America's Godly Heritage.

Historical revisionists have been busy rewriting the history of America. Letters to the editor of the local paper often cite lessons they learned in a history class to rebut claims that America was founded on Christian principles. Well, let me stress this - America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles - but more specifically, upon New Testament concepts.

Those who want to drive Christianity out of the public arena try to deny out Christian heritage, but they cannot do it. David Limbaugh, in his book, *PERSECUTION: HOW LIBERALS ARE PERSECUTING CHRISTIANITY*, reviews our Christian heritage. David Barton of *WALL BUILDERS*, has accumulated an incredible library of the works of the Founders, including the testimonies of the signers of the Constitution, and they tell us in their own words that this nation was founded on Christian principles. Yet, millions seem not to know that. Others resist this truth with a religious fanaticism. But the facts are very clear.

Many of those early settlers came to America looking for religious freedom. They sought to GAVE us a government that honored and respected the Word of God. The founders quoted the Bible more

than any other source - and when they were not quoting the Bible, they were quoting people who were commenting on the Word of God. There has been a conscious effort to humanize and secularize America. Others have sought to convert America to some false religion, but the facts are there. America has a godly heritage, though many refuse to believe it.

## II. ISRAEL'S BACKSLIDING IS REFLECTED IN AMERICA'S APOSTASY.

### A. False Teaching Had Led to Faulty Practices.

#### 1. Israel is indicted for this failure.

“An appalling and horrible thing Has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?” (Jer. 5:30-31).

“Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'--that you may do all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," declares the LORD. But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel” (Jer. 7:8-12).

#### 2. America is just as guilty.

The church today is filled with the fruits of false teachings: liberalism, cynicism, and apostasy paved the way for the removal of prayer, Scripture, and the teaching of Creation from classrooms, and acceptance of same sex unions, ordination of homosexuals, abortion, and countless of other problems. Some people working to get the Bible and prayer back into our schools. Right now, I would settle for getting them back into our churches. If that happens they will never be able to keep them out of the schools.

### B. False Worship Follow False Teachings.

#### 1. Ancient Israel was guilty of false worship.

“For what purpose does frankincense come to Me from Sheba And the sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable And your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me” (Jer. 6:19).

“Behold, listen! ...’Why have they provoked Me with their graven images, with

foreign idols? Harvest is past, summer is ended, And we are not saved” (Jer. 19-20).

2. America is also guilty.

America today bows before pagan altars of materialism, moral relativism, pleasure, recreation, entertainment, and immorality. Americans also bow before pagan altars of various cults, the occult, and such false religions as Islam. Sadly, powerful forces in America are determined to make ours a totally secular society. And where is the church? In some cases, the church is engaged in sociological enterprises. In others the Bible has been pushed into the background and praise music had over shadowed everything else. Praise is good! Praise should be a response to a blessing. However, praise for many people is the blessing. They want to come to church anticipating a good feeling and they are determined to leave feeling good. They want to Scripture or sermon that might confront them with their sin. And what is the church giving them? Gary Gilly has a new book, THIS LITTLE CHURCH WENT TO MARKET. Where is the church? Gone to market?

C. False Teachings Leads to the Rejection of Creation.

1. Jeremiah’s contemporaries failed to honor their Creator.

“It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens. When He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, And brings out the wind from His storehouses. Every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge; Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols; For his molten images are deceitful, And there is no breath in them. They are worthless, a work of mockery; In the time of their punishment they will perish” (Jer 10:12-15).

2. America today does not honor the God of Creation.

The Twentieth Century was a century of evolution and the catastrophic results. If you want to sell people on abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, homosexuality, adultery, or even greed, first sell them on evolution - a totally defenseless position scientifically or spiritually. If you have no Creator you do not fear a judge. In which case you need no Savior. If you do not have Genesis One you do not need John One, and if you do not have Genesis 3 you do not need John 3.

Those who reject God as the Creator will stand before Him as Judge. And where has the church been through all of this? I will tell you where the church has been - it has been busy defending one compromise theory after another. When Henry Morris and others began the modern creation movement both evolutionary scientists and theologians fought them (and all those preachers were not liberal).

#### D. False Teaching Leads to Willful Blindness and Deafness.

##### 1. Israel was guilty.

“Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, Who have eyes but do not see; Who have ears but do not hear. Do you not fear Me?’ declares the LORD. ‘Do you not tremble in My presence?’” (Jer. 5:21-22a).

##### 2. America is just as guilty.

America is sinning against a far greater light than the people of Jeremiah’s day. Americans do not want to be accused of sin, but ironically, they do not mind confessing ignorance: “I did something stupid”; “I made a bad decision.” A careful reading of the first chapter of Romans will reveal that man’s sin problem is not ignorance but iniquity. In case you are deceived about it, God is not.

#### E. We Could Mention Many More Examples.

1) Both peoples have failed to keep the Sabbath Day holy.

2) Substance abuse is a problem for those who turn a deaf ear to God.

3) Covetousness leads to lying, stealing, and violence.

### III. GOD HAS A PRESCRIPTION FOR THOSE WHO ARE GUILTY.

#### A. The Answer for Israel Was Repentance.

“Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls.

But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'

And I set watchmen over you, saying, ' Listen to the sound of the trumpet!'

But they said, 'We will not listen.'

“Therefore hear, O nations, And know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people, The fruit of their plans, Because they have not listened to My words, And as for My law, they have rejected it also” (Jer 6:16-19).

God demanded that ancient Israel repent and return to the old paths. They must return to God and



follow Him. In other words, they must obey Him. They would never obey Him if they did not honor His word. The priests and prophets must return to the old paths - teach the people the Word of God without compromise.

B. God's Answer for America is Repentance.

We need to return to the old paths. We must return to the word of God. This message applies to individual believers and it applies to the church. There are churches in every denomination that need to return to the old paths. There are whole denominations that need to return to the old paths.

Preachers and teachers must teach sound doctrine. We must return to the conviction that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God - the perfect Word of the perfect God. As such it is our authority in all things of which, and to which it speaks.

How do we get started? Begin with individual believers on their face before God, confessing their sins and asking to be restored to the old paths - "Give me that old time religion"! Then we must see churches come before the Lord, asking Him to restore them and return them to the old paths. We must return to our spiritual roots in the Word of God. The Holy Spirit will guide you and empower you if you sincerely humble yourself before Him and let Him work within you.

CONCLUSION. America is reflected in Jeremiah's message to ancient Israel, and while we do not need television to prove it, the proof is there. If we are ever to return to the old paths, we are going to have to be willing to let the Lord altar our calendar, our clock, and the TV guide, and the radio dial. There are many other things that need attention - education, politics, science, music - but we must start somewhere. And we had better start now, before it is too late. Israel waited too late met God in a judgment. Let us meet him in grace today.

The weeping prophet lamented, "Harvest is past, summer is ended, And we are not saved." Oh God, grant us the wisdom to repent before it is too late. The Lord finally reached the point that he declared: "Then the LORD said to me, "Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go!" (Jer 15:1). My friends, we can wait too late. But where is the church? Where are our people?

Let me urge you to begin right now - you as one individual - by returning to the ancient paths. Repent and obey the Lord right now.

