

Life's Ultimate Questions
Is There Any Hope for My Country?
Jeremiah 2: 9-13

Dr. Steve Horn

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Text Introduction: We are in a series of messages in the book of Jeremiah. We are calling this series Life's Ultimate Questions. Today our question is "Is there any hope for my country?" You might not necessarily agree with me that this is one of life's ultimate questions. I don't want to spend a lot of time defending whether this is an ultimate question or not. I would just simply refer to the context of the Old Testament and remind us that Israel's faith and their success/failure as a nation are so intricately tied together that one cannot talk about one without the other.

The prophets of the Old Testament show us the struggle that many of us face today and that is the place of where our faith intersects with our patriotism.

Text: Therefore, I will bring a case against you again.

This is the LORD's declaration.

I will bring a case against your children's children.

¹⁰ Cross over to Cyprus and take a look.

Send someone to Kedar and consider carefully;

see if there has ever been anything like this:

¹¹ Has a nation ever exchanged its gods?

(But they were not gods!)

Yet My people have exchanged their Glory

for useless idols.

¹² Be horrified at this, heavens;

be shocked and utterly appalled.

This is the LORD's declaration.

¹³ For My people have committed a double evil:

They have abandoned Me,

the fountain of living water,

and dug cisterns for themselves,

cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.

Introduction: Do you want some good news that you probably did not know? Every day, 80,000 people profess their faith in Jesus Christ for the first time. To put that in perspective, a literal Pentecost happens every hour—approximately 3,333 people saved every hour. It is widely believed that now in China there are more born again Christians than members of the Communist party. Not all that long ago, Indonesia was considered 100% Muslim. Today, the number of Christians has risen so rapidly that the Muslim dominated government of Indonesia chooses no longer to produce statistics so as not to have to show how many are Indonesian Christians. Mission experts indicate that every day, somewhere in the world, an additional 515 churches are started.

Now, for the bad news! While we celebrate these advances in the kingdom world-wide, this advance in the kingdom is not true in Europe, or sadly North America, most especially, including our beloved United States of America. In fact, as is well attested and observed, Christianity is heavily on the decline. Morality in America has reached an all-time low. Decisions even this week by the Supreme Court point to this increasing moral decay in our country. On this week that we celebrate our nation's independence, we are troubled with this question: "Is there any hope for my country?"

In our text today, God, through the prophet Jeremiah has a warning for Judah. No doubt, the same warning could be spoken about our beloved United States of America. On this Sunday before the celebration of our independence, when we give thanks and remember the sacrifices for the freedom we enjoy, let us consider again what is really needed in our nation. The text begs that we ask several questions.

Has our nation changed Gods? The Accusation

The position of Jeremiah's sermon right after the description of Jeremiah's call leads us to believe that these words are representative of some of the first sermons that Jeremiah preached for the LORD. Jeremiah is always quick to remind that his words are really the words of God. Jeremiah's sermon is in the form of an accusation—a chief formal complaint much like a legal proceeding. After giving his hearers the opportunity to make a complaint against God, Jeremiah presents God's case against Israel. God has brought two charges against Israel. The same charges could be made against America.

- Like Judah, we have surrendered our allegiance.

They have abandoned Me, the fountain of living water. 2:13

- Like Judah, we have substituted other things in place of God.

And dug cisterns for themselves—cracked cisterns that cannot hold water. 2:13

Certainly, it would have been enough to forsake God, but they have substituted God with gods that are worthless. Jeremiah uses an analogy of comparing a fresh water spring to a cistern, but not just any cistern—a broken cistern that can hold no water.

America has forsaken God to follow her own gods. The list is long—materialism, pleasure, spirituality not based on God's Spirit.

What can we say about a nation that changes Gods? The Assessment

Our text also points us to God's assessment of a nation that forsakes Him.

- Amazing

See if there has ever been anything like this. 2:10

The first word that we can use to describe a nation that forsakes God is "amazing." It is amazing that a nation who once served God or a person who once served God would forsake God. Jeremiah

pointed to other nations and their gods. They did not have the one true God, but they did not abandon their gods.

➤ Absurd

Yet my people have exchanged their Glory for useless idols. 2:11

The second word is absurd. It is absurd that anyone would exchange God—the one true, living God—for a god that is worthless.

➤ Appalling

Be horrified (appalled) at this, heavens; be shocked and utterly appalled. 2:12

The last word is appalling. Forsaking God just doesn't make sense

What happens to a nation that changes Gods? The Aftermath

We have to make sure that we understand the consequences of forsaking God. There seem to be at least three in this text.

➤ Forfeiture of God's Blessing. (2:14-17)

Is Israel a slave?

Was he born into slavery?

Why else has he become a prey?

¹⁵ The young lions have roared at him;
they have roared loudly.

They have laid waste his land.

His cities are in ruins, without inhabitants.

¹⁶ The men of Memphis and Tahpanhes
have also broken your skull.

¹⁷ Have you not brought this on yourself
by abandoning the LORD your God
while He was leading you along the way?

In a similar way, America forfeits the blessing of God in disobedience. A nation cannot have the blessing of God and disobey at the same time.

➤ Failure to see the severity of sin.

How can you protest, "I am not defiled, I have not followed the Baals." 2:23

Over time, we fail to see the severity of our sin. We become accustomed to our sin. We accept our sin. We even fail to call our sin by the word "sin."

➤ Fatal Attraction to other gods.

But you say: It's hopeless; I love strangers, and I will continue to follow them. 2:25

Sooner or later, we develop a "fatal attraction" to these sins. This fatal attraction is expressed in the text in verse 25, "and I will continue to follow them." Israel cannot help herself anymore.

I'm sure everyone has heard about the comments that Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of Billy Graham, made in an interview on CBS's "The Early Show" on the Thursday after the 9-11 attacks on our nation.

According to the transcript of the broadcast, interviewer Jane Clayson asked, "I've heard people say, those who are religious, those who are not, if God is good, how could God let this happen? To that, you say?"

Lotz replied, "I say God is also angry when he sees something like this. I would say also for several years now Americans in a sense have shaken their fist at God and said, God, we want you out of our schools, our government, our business, we want you out of our marketplace. And God, who is a gentleman, has just quietly backed out of our national and political life, our public life—removing his hand of blessing and protection. We need to turn to God first of all and say, God, we're sorry we have treated you this way and we invite you now to come into our national life. We put our trust in you. We have our trust in God on our coins. We need to practice it."

Such a statement leads us to the final question of this text.

Is there any hope for a nation that changes Gods? The Answer

➤ Re-Discover the grace of God.

I will not look on you with anger, for I am unfailing in My love. 3:12

➤ Repent
Only acknowledge your guilt. 3:13

➤ Return
Return, you faithless children. 3:14

Revival always begins with me. If revival in America mirrored the revival in your own spiritual walk, how far away or close to real revival would we be? I'm not asking how you are doing in the keeping of some list of commands (though that might be a by-product of revival), I'm speaking of the freshness, vitality, maturity, and strength of your walk with God right now.

The Old Testament tells us the story of the nation of Israel. The nation reached its peak under King David and King Solomon. In fact, the prosperity of the kingdom under Solomon is unparalleled. Everything changed with Solomon's son, Rehoboam. In fact, the very first verse describing his kingdom summarizes his rebellion: "He abandoned the law of the Lord." (2 Chronicles 12:1) In five short years, the kingdom crumbled with the invasion of King Shishak of Egypt. Again the Bible summarizes the loss: "He took everything." (2 Chronicles 12:10) In a way that tragically paints the picture of the fallen kingdom, the Bible records for us that Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace the gold shields. In a very real sense, Rehoboam settled for something inferior and attempted to pass it off as the real thing.

I fear that we often do the same thing.