

Jeremiah 40

Read Jeremiah 40:1-4: The main problem with men is not the lack of understanding. It's the refusal to reason when the truth does not suit us. We do not need to be Bible students to understand. God has made things obvious to everyone.

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. ² Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. (Psalm 19)

Somehow the Babylonians clearly understood Jeremiah. They clearly understood that the Jews were being disciplined by God. How could men without biblical training understand that; while God's people ignored it? That is one reason that it can be easier to evangelize heathen sinners than kids raised in church.

I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither [k]cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. (Revelation 3)

That insincere strategy to *play dumb* transforms us into lesser beings. Violating our built-in conscience forces us to bypass our normal mental and emotional processes. Unbelievers can humble us by being more tuned in to what God is doing. Sometimes we can be slower on the uptake than an animal.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me; ³ The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider." (Isaiah 1)

The Bible tells us that we become like unreasoning animals when we knowingly exchange truth for lies.

Now the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. ²⁴ Then the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. ²⁵ And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again. ²⁶ Then the Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. ²⁷ And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. ²⁸ Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" ²⁹ And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!" ³⁰ So the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" And he said, "No." ³¹ Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his

head and fell flat on his face. ³² And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. ³³ The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live.” (Numbers 22)

The unbelieving world was seeing what God’s people were not seeing. Nebuzaradan the Babylonian captain freed Jeremiah. He said that his prophecy from God came true, because the Jews sinned against God. Jeremiah had been telling people for decades that God was sending the Babylonians. The Jews were supposed to showcase God’s goodness. Instead, they showcased his nature to correct evil behavior beginning in his own household. The Jews were to be the light of the world, but instead they put a light on how God disciplines uncontrollable children. There is nothing more embarrassing than having an unbeliever correct your immoral behavior.

because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. ²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; (Romans 1)

It is interesting that the Gentile world seemed to sit up and take notice of God’s greatness more than the Jews. This outside observation of God’s hand has happened before. Even Rahab the prostitute in Jericho figured it out.

Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹ and said to the men: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. (Joshua 2)

Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. ²I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. ³How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation. (Daniel 4)

The Babylonians were aware of who was rebelling against them, and who was advocating for them. They knew that Jeremiah had been telling the people to go with the Babylonians.

It was like having a mafia figure say *shame on you!* They gave Jeremiah the royal treatment, including food, protection and complete freedom to go his own way. God can use drug addict neighbors or mobsters or any kind of sinner to help you in your time of need.

Read Jeremiah 40:5-16: The Jews failed to listen to God. Now there was a very small, scattered group of Jews in Judah and among surrounding nations who had not been killed or taken into captivity. You would think that these poor people, left to farm the land could see clearly that going against God does not work. God left these poor people a way to re-group and start again in line with God's plans. Unfortunately, they did not commit this new start to prayer. Nebuchadnezzar set up Gedaliah as the Jewish governor over Israel. He would protect and govern Jeremiah, and the local Jews. All of the Jews who fled to Moab and Ammon and Edom came back to Judah, under the protections offered through Gedaliah.

The militias and armies of the local nations who had looted Judah were also given standing to remain, by the governor. It was like an international neutral zone, with Babylon making the rules. The looters and militias were free to gather whatever they could for the taking. He told them they could benefit from controlling the cities they had looted and invaded. That was a pretty sweet deal. They just had to ultimately pay homage to Babylon. Gedaliah was an empowered referee. Babylon conscripted many militias and foreign armies under their ultimate rule. This is how Ghengis Kahn expanded his military as well.

A commonly used Mongol tactic involved the use of the *kharash*. The Mongols would gather prisoners captured in previous battles and would drive them forward in sieges and battles. These "shields" would often take the brunt of enemy arrows and crossbow bolts, thus somewhat protecting the ethnically Mongol warriors. Commanders also used the *kharash* as assault units to breach walls.



Helmet and armour of a Mongol Yuan warrior during the Mongol invasion of Japan

As they were conquering new people, the Mongols integrated into their armies the conquered people's men if they had surrendered - willingly or otherwise. Therefore, as they expanded into other areas and conquered other people, their troop numbers increased. Exemplifying this is the Battle of Baghdad, during which many diverse people fought under Mongol lordship. Despite this integration, the Mongols were never able to gain long-term loyalty from the settled peoples that they conquered.

These collaborating military units warned the governor that he was in danger. The Ammonites sent Ishmael to murder the governor. The Ammonites were one of the groups who looted Judah because they hated the Jews. The military captain over Judah, Johanan advised Gedaliah that Ishmael was out to kill him. The Ammonites did not want anyone to rally the Jews back together and preserve the remnant. Their hatred for the Jews was so great, that they were furious that a remnant was receiving protections to return by the governor. The militia leader offered the governor to assassinate the assassins sent for him. Gedaliah blew it off as a false notion. Ishmael the Ammonite murdered the governor, and he murdered many of the Jews who came out from hiding to live at home again (see chapter 41).