

Jeremiah 8

Read Jeremiah 8:1-3: One problem in Jeremiah and throughout history is that man wants to be considered *honorable or significant* without living honorably. Personal glory seems to be the way to go, until you grow up and see that what you want is not good for others. God has put eternity in our hearts. Is it achieved through personal glory; or glorifying God? How to get there is the question. The Bible gives honor to those who live honorably; and disgraces the dishonorable. The idea of immortality and spiritual connections are associated with man's view of having an honorable legacy. Having a connection with the gods has been a priority since the beginning of mankind. Our current popular culture seems to be full of followers who want to belong to a movement.

Today, many Americans are more in touch with a *death culture* than a culture of life and affirmation. It is more likely that you will see a Grateful Dead bumper sticker than a *choose life* sticker. It is more likely that you will see a pirate or *metal mulisha* skull on a car than a bible verse.

The same dynamic was true when this was written. Men wanted to become gods. One ongoing practice that was a cause for judgement was the worship of the sun, moon and stars. Jeremiah pointed out how disgraceful it is to worship the creation instead of the creator. Those who practiced this *confusion* would serve as examples for generations to come. King Josiah completely dishonored the worshipers of various astral bodies.

Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. ⁶ And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people.... As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. ¹⁷ Then he said, "What gravestone is this that I see?" So the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel." ¹⁸ And he said, "Let him alone; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria. ¹⁹ Now Josiah also took away all the ^[m]shrines of the ^[n]high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke ^[o]the LORD to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. (2 Kings 23)

Jeremiah did not preach empty platitudes without immediate consequences. King Josiah lived concurrently to Josiah, and he tore apart all false worship practices. He did his best to make their dishonoring of God to become a dishonor to themselves.

640 BC—Josiah succeeded Amon

633 BC—Josiah sought after God (2 Chron 34:3)

Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria died

Cyaxares became king of Media

628 BC—Josiah began reforms

627BC —Jeremiah called to be a prophet

626 BC—Nabopolassar became king of Babylonia

621 BC—book of the law found in the Temple

612 BC—Nineveh destroyed

609 BC—Josiah slain at Megiddo

How is the exhuming of the bones from graves considered to be a disgrace; and the ending of a legacy? The Jews have strong feelings about burial procedures. They want their bones buried in their homeland, near the graves of their relatives. They do not want their corpse defiled. The thinking behind the treatment of the corpse is not a biblical concept. Here is an excerpt from Jewish traditions:

A speedy burial has benefits for the living and for the dead, while delaying a funeral unnecessarily is no good for either. Between death and burial, the soul of the departed is in limbo between two worlds, neither fully on earth nor ready to be admitted into heaven. The soul no longer inhabits the body after death, but until the body is laid to rest, the soul cannot fully leave the body either. So it hovers around the body, in a state of disorientation at its sudden expulsion from the body that was its home for a lifetime. Once the body returns to the dust from whence it came, the soul can return to the heaven from whence it came. And so, only after the burial does the soul begin its climb to higher realms. The soul's onward journey can't begin until the body is interred. We do not want to delay this process, so we hasten the funeral to the earliest opportunity. This is not just for the good of the departed soul. It is also for the benefit of the mourners. Just as the soul is in a state of confusion after death, the bereaved family goes through a stage of uncertainty immediately after the death, as they grapple to absorb what has happened. For many who experience loss, it seems unreal. They

feel that they are dreaming, and the person will soon walk through the door as if nothing happened. But reality hits at the funeral. That painful sound of dirt hitting the coffin evokes the raw pain of bereavement like nothing else can. It hurts, but it is necessary. Just as the soul cannot start moving upwards before burial, so too the mourners cannot start their long journey from grief to consolation until the grave is filled in.

How did the worship of the sun, moon and stars become so popular? We know that the Romans designed their mythological gods after the planets. They did not know that the planets were just complex rocks. Mythology was constructed in ignorance of planetary orbits. The people created correlations from their own daily circumstances and compared them to the interactions of the planets. They thought they were heavenly bodies of great gods watching us. The Romans saw the stars as fixed bodies, and that there were 5 visible *travelers* (planets) in the galaxy. They tied correlations of daily life to observations of planetary positioning. Their gods were: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. They did not include Uranus, Pluto and Neptune, since they were not discovered until the invention of the telescope. Here are a few observations they made:

Venus-The brightest and prettiest planet. The goddess of beauty and love

Mars-The red planet (blood/war/fire) became the god of war

Mercury-Fastest orbit around the sun became known as the fastest planet, so it became the messenger god

Jupiter-The biggest planet, became the king of the gods

Saturn- Became the god of agriculture and time

The Romans created their gods from the Greeks. The Greeks did the same exact thing before them. In fact, you can go back further and further in time and find the same things. The Assyrians, Egyptians and ancient Samaritans did the same thing. This even existed all the way back at the time of Abraham and at the Tower of Babel.

The Tower of Babel was the first ziggurat. It was a temple of worship of the gods in the universe. All ziggurats had elevated platforms for worship of the stars. It was a way for man to get closer to the heavens and create a meeting and worship place. The ziggurat at Ur (below) was in Abram's hometown; and the bible tells us that his family were idolaters. It was

dedicated to the moon god Nanna. The moon god is the idol that Islam eventually connected with.



Sin or **Suen** also known as **Nanna** was the **Mesopotamian god** representing the **moon**. In addition to his astral role, Sin was also closely associated with cattle herding. Furthermore, there is some evidence that he could serve as a judge of the dead in the **underworld**. A distinct tradition in which he was regarded either as a god of equal status as the usual heads of the **Mesopotamian pantheon**, **Enlil** and **Anu**, or as a **king of the gods** in his own right, is also attested, though it only had limited recognition. In **Mesopotamian art**, his symbol was the crescent. When depicted anthropomorphically, he typically either wore headwear decorated with it or held a staff topped with it, though on **kudurru** the crescent alone served as a representation of him. He was also associated with boats.

Read Jeremiah 8:4-10 :Jeremiah was amazed that his people did not swerve to repent, in the face of total destruction. It is one thing to make short-sided decisions and live to regret it. It is a whole other thing to live in sin with no regrets. He states that even birds know when it is time to fly back home for the winter. Like a war horse charging into battle, they blocked out everything telling them to stop. They could not see the obvious lies and misrepresentations being made by the false prophets. All hope appears to be lost; and yet they do not try the God option. There is nothing that you can do with a person who is committed not to repent. What they have must be taken away.

Read Jeremiah 8:11-13: God is carrying out poetic justice. The Jews had become idolaters, adulterers, thieves and abusers of the poor. Likewise, God subjected them to these same abuses by others. Like the Great Tribulation, some sinners will have to be brought to within an inch of their life to repent...but many will not. It is very hard for God to give us freedom, and watch us

destroy ourselves with it. When we turn away from the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we harden our hearts and our ability to perceive our situation becomes distorted.

And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” ¹⁰ But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. ¹¹ And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, ¹² so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.’ ” (Matthew 4:9-12)

Read Jeremiah 8: 14-22: The healing ointment from Gilead is symbolic of God’s presence among the Jews. Instead of applying God’s healing and corrections, the Jews went another way. God had to use more and more exotic and cruel tools to make them stop their self-destruction. He sent nation after nation against them. These are the same nations who they depended on as their savior. God has always been in the business of crushing our idols. The wrong-way signs become increasingly obvious...until the road is just completely blocked. Being given to sin is like being drunk. You just keep forcing your way forward. We become oblivious to the damage being made.