

*Has America Changed Gods?
Jeremiah 2:9-13*

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Text: ⁹ “Therefore I will yet bring charges against you,” says the LORD,
“And against your children’s children I will bring charges.
¹⁰ For pass beyond the coasts of Cyprus and see,
Send to Kedar and consider diligently,
And see if there has been such *a thing*.
¹¹ Has a nation changed *its* gods,
Which *are* not gods?
But My people have changed their Glory
For *what* does not profit.
¹² Be astonished, O heavens, at this,
And be horribly afraid;
Be very desolate,” says the LORD.
¹³ “For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,
And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Introduction: I specifically asked John Frank to sing our national anthem this morning. I have heard before that this is among the most difficult songs to sing. Maybe that explains why we usually only sing one verse of *The Star Spangled Banner*. Did you know that it has a second verse? Have you ever noticed that the first verse actually ends with a question? What’s the question? “Oh, say, does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave o’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?” We sing that line like it is a declaration, but it is a question. Noticing this line as a question, the second verse is the answer to the question.

Hear again the second verse:

*Oh thus be it ever when free men shall stand
Between their loved homes and war’s desolation
Blessed with victory and peace may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us as a nation
Then conquer we must when our cause is just
And this be our motto, “In God Is Our Trust!”
When we do that then the Star Spangled Banner
In triumph shall wave
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.*

Did you see what Francis Scott Key was saying? The only hope for America is for us to honor and acknowledge the one God over our nation!

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 Memorial Day Weekend, when we remember the lives lost 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 forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters. 2:13
- Like Judah, we have substituted other things in place of God.
And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no 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
And see if there has been such a thing. 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

But my people have changed their glory for what does not profit. 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 astonished (appalled), O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be very desolate
2:12*

The last word is appalling. Forsaking God just doesn't make sense. I probably will make some queasy with this illustration, but it makes such a good analogy here. Just a week or so ago there was a local news story about some employees at a fast food restaurant in a nearby town who were arrested for spitting in a customer's drink. Now suppose you know which is the clean drink and the one that has been subject to this kind of prank. The idea of the text is that to forsake God for a worthless god is like choosing the tainted drink.

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)

¹⁴ “ *Is Israel a servant?*

Is he a homeborn slave?

Why is he plundered?

¹⁵ *The young lions roared at him, and growled;*

They made his land waste;

His cities are burned, without inhabitant.

¹⁶ *Also the people of Noph and Tahpanhes*

Have broken the crown of your head.

¹⁷ *Have you not brought this on yourself,*

In that you have forsaken the LORD your God

When He led you in 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 say, “I am not polluted, I have not gone after 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.

No! For I have loved aliens, And after them I will go. 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 after them I will go.” Israel cannot help herself anymore.

By now, 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 cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful. 3:12

➤ Repent

Only acknowledge your iniquity. 3:13

➤ Return

Return, O backsliding children. 3:14

So what can we as individuals do? Well, some of us need to repent, ourselves, of sin. How do you have revival in a nation? We can experience revival one person at a time. Beyond our own repentance, we need to stand in the gap in prayer for our nation. We need to spiritually do for our nation what Rick Monday physically did for his nation. Who is Rick Monday? Rick played Major League Baseball in the 1970’s for the Chicago Cubs and the Los Angeles Dodgers. Rick Monday had a rather average Major League career, but he, in my estimation, made one of the most spectacular plays ever made in a baseball game on April 25, 1976. I have a clip of the play to show you. (The clip is of

Rick Monday sprinting from his position to rescue an American flag that is being prepared to be set on fire by two men who have jumped onto the playing field.) When he came up to bat in the next half-inning, he got a standing ovation from the crowd and the big message board behind the left-field bleachers in the stadium flashed the message, "RICK MONDAY... YOU MADE A GREAT PLAY..."

What about you today? What is your decision? Is there any area in your life that has become a god and replaced the King of Kings as LORD over your life?