

## Don't Be Stupid (Jeremiah 9:23–10:2)

By Jeff Alexander (2/16/2020)

### Context

1. The title of the message this morning may seem a bit politically incorrect, but it is biblical.
  - a. *Stupid* (*ba'ar*) has three uses in Scripture, depending on the context.
    - 1) It is most often used of *kindling* a fire or burning something: “*You shall kindle [ba'ar] no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day*” (Exodus 35:3).
    - 2) It also refers to *purging* or removing something to be rid of it: “*So you shall purge [ba'ar] the evil from your midst*” (Deuteronomy 22:21).
    - 3) It is also used of *thinking* or acting *senselessly* as a fool—one devoid of proper understanding of God and His rules and ways: “*They say, ‘The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.’ Understand, O dullest [ba'ar] of the people! Fools, when will you be wise?*” (Psalm 94:7, 8).
  - b. There are 11 occurrences of this word in Jeremiah, all but four are translated “to burn.” The four are all translated “stupid,” each being joined with a term demonstrating their stupidity (vv. 8, 14, 21; 51:17).
  - c. Three of the four *stupid* references are found in Chapter 10. All four have a connection with idolatry (10:8).
2. The context of the passage before us involves the terrible judgment coming to the nation of Israel on account of her sins.
  - a. The prophet exposed the people as to their failure to recognize their true condition and resulting state before the Lord.
  - b. The prophet addressed the condition of the *nation* but placed the blame with the *individuals* that made up the nation. Compare Chapter 10, verse 1 (“*Hear the word that the Lord has spoken to you, house of Israel*”) with Chapter 9, verse 23 (“*Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom,*” etc.).

### Background

1. The power of the Word of Yahweh

During the repair of the temple under King Josiah, the book of the law was discovered by Hilkiyah, the high priest, who delivered it to Shaphan, the scribe, to be read to the king (2 Chronicles 34:8ff.).

  - a. The king’s inquiry (2 Chronicles 34:25)
  - b. The king’s obedience (v. 30)
2. Revival
  - a. Humbling, when Josiah heard the words of the book of the covenant and knew that the nation had failed to keep the covenant, he humbled himself.
  - b. Restoration, he then sought to lead the nation to covenant again with Yahweh to keep His commandments, statutes, and testimonies with all their hearts and all their souls (2 Chronicles 34:31–33). The big question is, were they following the Lord and His covenant, or were they following the king?
3. The last verse sounds wonderful, but . . .
  - a. The people were not following the Lord but the policies of the government in power.

- b. The people were lulled into a false security because of three things: (1) Their misunderstanding of the promise made to King David concerning the permanency of his dynasty and the temple in Jerusalem. (2) They falsely assumed their standing with God to be based on circumcision and their relationship to Abraham. (3) They believed the message of the false prophets (Jeremiah 8:11; 9:12–14).

### Wise Instruction

1. The *false* elements of national (or church) strength.
  - a. *Wisdom*—human wisdom derived from worldly sources (James 3:13–18)
  - b. *Strength*—either physical (great armaments) or political (powerful strategies) (Psalm 33:16–19)
  - c. *Wealth*—the means to buy and control the loyalty and service of others (Psalm 49:5–9)
2. The *true* elements of national (or church) strength
  - a. *Steadfast love* (*chesed*, covenant love) is defined as love that condescends to lift the lowly. It is often described as *mercy*, a love in action that stoops to those with no means of recovery.
  - b. *Justice* administers affairs with strict equity based on truth.
  - c. *Righteousness* reflects the being of God in action—*straightness* with no perversity, no iniquity, and no crookedness (wickedness).
3. The Lord Himself *practices* (*bara*, creates, exercises, and demonstrates [shows]) these things because He *delights* in them.
  - a. *Boasting* (*halal*, glory or praise) must not be in what *we* deem valuable but what *we know* of Yahweh.
  - b. Verse 24 ought to read, “*He has insight in order to know Me, that I am Yahweh.*” This insight is *supernaturally* bestowed as a grace to those whom the Lord loves (1 Corinthians 2:6, 7, 10).

### Take Away

Considering what we have learned about Yahweh and His ways, what happens to us when His blessing is suddenly removed and replaced by something that appears to be His judgment?

This is Job’s story, and he and his friends drew all the wrong conclusions because they were *stupid*. Job was foolishly confused and felt betrayed. In Job’s faulty conception of what he thought ought to be, he balked at the treatment he was receiving. Job and his friends were operating on pure human wisdom, but things radically changed when God confronted Job.

Rather than explaining His treatment of Job, God challenged him with His own glorious person and power displayed in His creation. Job was given insight to see who God really was. Here was a God that Job never imagined. He was informed that God was and would always be deeply involved in the daily affairs of His creatures, providing food, habitat, and overseeing their birthing and growth of their offspring (Job 38:39; 39:30). When Job rightly understood the wisdom, power, and care of God, he no longer required an explanation of his circumstances. He humbled himself in the glory of the God he now beheld with clear eyes. He understood that his criticism of God was due to his ignorance, from which he repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:16).

Job did not need to understand his circumstances. He needed only to know his God. Do you?