

# America the Desolate!

by E.A. Johnston

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*E.A. Johnston's sermon 'America the Desolate!' warns of the spiritual crisis in America and calls for urgent repentance and revival.*

**Duration:** 26:51

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:9

**Topics:** "America"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for the church to wake up and recognize the desperate state of the nation. He highlights America's spiritual death due to national and corporate sins. The preacher explains that when a nation turns away from God, judgment is imminent. He shares a powerful story of a pastor who was convicted to preach the true gospel after being chastised by a dying man, leading to a revival in his church. The sermon also references the book of Jeremiah to illustrate how Israel's rebellion against God led to spiritual desolation.

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## Transcript

In 1740, when God moved through New England, it was called the Great Awakening. Revival has often been referred to as an awakening. At Gethsemane, Jesus faced the crisis point of his earthly ministry, and his disciples slept right through it.

Today, the church in America is in a crisis point, and we are sleeping right through it. The sad thing is, there's an older generation dying off that once saw God move in the midst of his people, but now there are many today in our land because of their younger age. They accept the atmosphere in our churches as normal because that is all they've ever known.

The presence of God is absent, and his absence is normal. My message today is entitled, America the Desolate, and the text I will preach from is Jeremiah 6 and verse 8, for this verse speaks of a land desolate of God. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate a land not inhabited.

In the book of Jeremiah, there is the sad account of how Israel had moved away from the heart of God, and because of their rebellion against God, they were cast into a place of spiritual desolation, a spiritual desert. Instead of having the precious presence of God in their midst, they now experience the absence of God. Listen friends, in America today, in our churches, we are experiencing the absence of God, and this

is a severe judgment from God.

We need to wake up as a church and rouse ourselves from our slumber and realize the desperate hour in which we live. America the Desolate, desolate of the presence of the Almighty, how tragic because of our great national sins and because of our corporate sins, there is a spiritual dearth in our land. As we study our Bibles, we need to pay attention to how God deals with the rebellious people who have turned their backs on Him.

God calls them a foolish people. When a nation turns from the word of God and following God and rejects God, then all that's left is impending judgment from an offended creator. Surely, America at this hour is such a foolish nation.

A holy and just God will speak to a nation concerning their national sins. He will speak in two ways. He will speak by action or He will speak through silence.

He will speak with action by bringing remedial judgments upon a nation and upon a people in the hope of turning that nation back to Him. If this does not work, He will speak through silence. He will withdraw Himself from a people and a nation.

Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee a desolate land not inhabited. A departing of God is a terrible thing. Lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

One of the worst judgments that can befall a nation is when God departs and withdraws His presence from among that nation. And I fear this is what has happened in America today. We have so grieved God and provoked Him and grossly sinned against Him that He has withdrawn His presence from us.

There is a spiritual desolation in the land of America today. How few there are who are crying out to God for mercy. How few there are today who are convicted of their sins.

How few there are today who are melted down under the presence of God. Rather, what prevails is desolation, dryness, deadness in our churches. I meet Christians all the time from all over the country and they all say the same thing.

The churches are dying. The Holy Spirit is not there. It's hard to find good preaching.

They know there must be more to church than just getting together each week for some teaching and socializing. Oh friends, we must ask ourselves, where is the God of Elijah? Where is the God of Elijah? There are several things which occur when God withdraws Himself from a nation and I will go over these very carefully for they are startling when examined. I call this message for today, America the Desolate, because there are solemn similarities between the Jews of old and our nation today.

Let us see of which I speak. We will begin in chapter 5 and verses 20 through 31. Declare this in the house of Jacob and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding, which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not, fear ye not me, saith the Lord? Will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it, and through the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail, though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolted and a rebellious heart, they are revolted and gone, neither say they in their heart.

Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men, they lay wait, as he that setteth snares, they set a trap, they catch men, as a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit.

Therefore they are become great and waxen rich, they are waxen fat, they shine, yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked, they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper, and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof? Well friends, this was the sad state of the Jews. Here in this passage from Jeremiah, we see God bemoaning the sins of Jerusalem and Judah.

God is lamenting over the fact that his people have forsaken him by caring only about their own welfare. They grow rich and fat and neglect the poor, but what provokes God more than all this is the false prophets who lead the people astray. The Jews had chosen their own prophets and priests to rule by their means, to speak soft messages to them which were pleasing to their ears.

They were so engrossed in their sins that death was all around them, and they were unaware of the impending doom which awaited them. God declares, shall I not visit for these things, shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Today in America, we have forsaken the Almighty and sinned against him with multiplied evils. In our churches in America today, we have grieved the heart of God by sinning under false teaching and false prophets because we love to have it so.

Our corporate sins are multiplied, and our sanctuaries are void of the presence of God. And in America today, our great judgment is the absence of God. Oh, desolate America, America, the desolate Ichabod is on the doors of our churches.

The glory has departed. Allow me to describe in detail the various judgments which God allows to befall a people under the silence of God. First, older saints of God, men mightily used of God, are called up to glory and there is no visible replacing of them.

One of the greatest departures of God from his people is when he removes prophets and saints from the world. In recent times in America, we have seen godly men like Leonard Ravenhill and David Wilkerson and others of that caliber called to glory when there is a long list of holy men taken away from us with no replacements for them. It is a sure sign that we are under a spiritual desolation, living in a spiritual desert.

We have reason to fear that God is clearing the land for a final judgment. Listen friends, I was at the funeral of my mentor, Stephen Oldford, and Adrian Rogers said something to me I will never forget. Adrian Rogers looked me in the eye and said, do you know what concerns me? I said, no Dr. Rogers, what concerns you? He stood there solemn with his arms folded across his chest and he replied, what concerns me is that I see God calling up men like Sidlo Baxter and Stephen Oldford and I look around and I don't see any comeuppers.

Did you hear that friends? No comeuppers. And the very next year God called up Adrian Rogers. When there is a dearth of godly men in the land, a vanishing of prophets, then there is a cause to be concerned.

I repeat, God is then clearing the land for a judgment. Remember our text, be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited, not inhabited with men of God whom he has raised up for special purposes, a desolate land where God has departed from thee. This alone should startle us out of our slumber, America the desolate.

Consider also that in the absence of God, another judgment is when the spiritual leaders of the churches fall into a slumber and do not heed the warnings and recognize the dangers that exist in our desperate hour. I was holed up in a hotel room with my dear friend Richard Owen Roberts a couple of weeks ago and we were discussing revival and the American church situation. I made a comment to him which he agreed with.

I said, brother, the one thing that astounds me more than anything else, it keeps me awake at night, it grips my soul with anguish, it is this, it is the sleepy pastor who refuses to alarm his congregation to the great need of the hour and sit in sackcloth and ashes in the sanctuary of his church crying out to God in real tears of brokenness and repentance over the sins of America and the corporate sins of the church. And that's true friends, if things are as bad as they are, if America is on the edge of ruin and her cup of iniquity is near full, then why oh why aren't the spiritual leaders of our land crying out to God for mercy in nights of solemn assembly where they call the people of God together to fast and pray and weep between the porch and the altar and lay hold of God in desperate prayer? Why aren't we all on our faces soaking the carpets in our sanctuaries with our tears? The absence of this is a sure sign that the church in America is under the judgment of God. Next, another mark that God has departed is when few are being saved.

We see few real conversions. Why aren't we seeing lost sinners crying out to God for mercy? How is it that nobody is tugging our coattail and asking us what must I do to be saved? Why aren't there broken-hearted sinners flooding the altar of your church each week with tears of repentance? Yes, churches are growing. People are walking the aisle and joining the church.

Many churches are expanding their sanctuaries to accommodate the new members. But in many cases, church growth is the result of already existing church members who are disgruntled at their present church, they don't like their pastor, and they move their membership to another church down the road. There are churches all over my city who are growing their sanctuaries by transfers of membership.

How sad it is when there are few sinners truly being saved. It is a solemn indication that God is absent from our midst. We have replaced Him with music and entertainment and fleshly activity.

But where, oh where, is the Holy Spirit today? Where is the conviction of sin? Where are tears of repentance? Next, when there is an over-proportion of those rejecting the gospel, then accepting it, then there is a departure of God in the land. Think of the Great Awakening in 1740. God moved throughout New England with plentiful outpourings of His grace.

Under the preaching of Edwards and Whitfield, thousands were swept into the kingdom of God. Ben Franklin said of this time that when George Whitfield preached on Society Hill in Philadelphia, it seemed as if the whole city was going religious. You could hear him sung in almost every house.

Look at the Second Great Awakening in the 19th century, and you see the same under the preaching of Fennick and Nettleton. Entire cities were shaken by God. The gospel had life and power back then because God was among His people in strong measure.

Look at the Businessman's Prayer Revival of 1858 and see how mightily God moved throughout the United States. In conversion after conversion, there was hardly a state in the Union unaffected by the mighty outpour of grace in our land in that day. But since that time, God has slowly and steadily withdrawn His presence from America because of her pride, her self-reliance, and gross national sins.

The cry of the sins of America rise up to God as in the days of Sodom, America the desolate. The very fact that there are so few truly being converted today is a sure sign of the departure of God in our land. This alone is a severe judgment from the Almighty.

Oh, we have many drawn into churches because of easy believism, but how few there are of a thorough, solid work of conversion by the Holy Spirit of God. Next, there is a departing of God in the land when gross evil and wickedness abounds. Look at the rise of militant homosexuality and lewdness and sensuality which has gripped this nation.

America has become a lustful nation, hungry for sexually stimulating entertainment, our televisions are open sewers spilling forth filth and the populace thirsts for more. We are a people who love our sins and hate a holy God, a God who hates sin. America used to be one nation under God, now America has become a nation against God.

We have walked God to our borders and told him goodbye, and our courts have legislated God out of our society. And lastly, when there is a dearth of sound preaching, there is desolation in the land. Our passage from Jeremiah stated, a wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land.

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so. Our churches are loaded with man-centered methodologies which tickle our flesh, but starve our spirit. Few are preaching the full counsel of God today.

Few preachers there are today who are preaching up the blood and the cross and calling sin black and hell hot. Few are preaching the great doctrines about ruin, redemption, repentance, and regeneration with the power of God upon them through a holy life. We have a nation of pulpits who teach rather than preach.

There is much teaching today, but very little true preaching. How many churches have adopted the mediocre mentality of teaching, teaching a fill-in-the-blank sermon where the congregation has their church bulletin in their hand awaiting the next word to fill in the blank? That, friends, is not preaching, but teaching. Teaching informs.

Preaching transforms. The lost are awakened to their sins by hearing the preaching of the word of God. Where, oh, where is the man of God preaching the great doctrines of God with the anointing of the Spirit of God? America the desolate, America the sad, America on the edge of ruin, only a Holy Ghost revival can save this great land of ours.

We should all be on our faces crying out to God right now, right now, weeping tears of repentance for our sins and the sins of the land. God is a God who hears the cries of His desperate people. He is a great God who can reverse the coming judgment, as He did in the days of Jonah and Nineveh.

The people of Nineveh, from the king down to the beast, sat in sackcloth and ashes and repented before the Almighty, and He spared them. Listen, friends, God can spare America today if we get right with Him, if we are willing to turn from our wicked ways and seek His face in true repentance and brokenness. We must lay hold of God in desperate prayer and be like Jacob and say, I will not let you go until you bless

me.

We must storm heaven with the holy violence and plead with God to heal our land. I want to encourage my preacher brethren with the following story. God will honor the preaching of His word when it's preached with no compromise.

Listen, in a big Baptist church in Memphis, there was once a pastor by the name of R.G. Lee. He was known for preaching a famous sermon called Payday Someday. There was a member in Dr. Lee's congregation, an attorney, who had to be out of town on business a lot.

But no matter where this lawyer went, he made sure to catch a train back to Memphis on Saturday night so he could listen to R.G. Lee preach on Sunday morning. He just loved to hear that man preach. Well, this lawyer got cancer, and he was in the hospital dying, and he called for his pastor to come up to his bedside.

Dr. Lee entered the hospital room whose window looked out over the Mississippi River. The lawyer called Dr. Lee to his bedside, and he approached. The lawyer told R.G. Lee, I want you to know how much I've enjoyed your preaching through the years, and I never missed a Sunday if I could help it.

I lie here dying with only a few weeks to live, and I want to chastise you, sir, for never telling me how to be saved. You never preached the cross to where I could see it. You never put the blood out there where I could reach it.

I'm dying, and I will die in my sins, and I chastise you, sir, for your lack of preaching the real gospel. R.G. Lee left that man's hospital room with his head down, feeling berated and guilty as charged. It was now dark outside as he walked down to the banks of the Mississippi River.

There he got down on his knees in the mud and dipped his hands in that muddy river, getting his white suit all dirty and his white pants dirty in the process, and right there and then he promised God from that point forward he would preach the cross and the blood, and he changed his message that night, and in three weeks time there was a move of grace at that church and three blocks of downtown Memphis was shaken with revival. Let us preach the truth boldly and ask God to bless it, friends. Let America once again be a land that fears God.

Let America once again be a land favored by God. Let America once again have the presence of God. There is hope for America.

There is hope for America, but it is up to the people of God to call this nation back to God. Pray, friends, that God will be pleased to send a national revival to America once again. Almighty revival will replace the absence of God.

It will replace it with the manifest presence of God. What God has done in former times, he can do again. Amen.

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