

During a study of God's word one morning, my wife read from **Jeremiah 25** concerning the seventy years of captivity of the Jewish people. We both began to see some interesting, sometimes alarming parallels to our present world and ourselves. We often wonder why it seems that God has turned us over to tyrants, and we get frustrated seeing people who mock God or even deny his existence all together, seemingly prosper and have what appears to be a great life. The lives of these Carnal people may appear to be good from a worldly perspective, but without God in their lives they really have nothing compared to those who do.

You have to remember, God gives us the freedom of choice . . . the thing most people always seem to forget however is that our Holy God remains Holy. Just because we have freedom of choice that doesn't mean that God has changed the rules. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His laws remain in place; the only thing different about our situation is the way that God deals with us when we transgress those laws. A preacher said years ago, "Life is like walking through a cafeteria . . . you make choices as you go . . . you pick out what looks good, but there is always a cash register at the end of the line where you have to pay for the choices you made." Check out these verses in Jeremiah and see if you don't catch the way they relate to today.

Jeremiah- 25:6-7 (NIV) ^[6] Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not provoke me to anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you." ^[7] "But you did not listen to me," declares the Lord, "and you have provoked me with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves."

New International Version

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Just as a speed limit sign warns of the possible wrath of the traffic court judge awaiting you if you get caught speeding, Jeremiah 25:6 warns of "the wrath of God" so to speak for choosing other gods over the true God. These other gods could be in the form of jobs, money, and other worldly possessions that are so important to those people who in many cases shun the true and living God. There is a price to pay for disobeying God's laws and rejecting his son. The last part of verse seven states plainly "you have brought harm to yourselves". . . how? By making bad choices! Jesus said the following:

Matthew-5:17-(NIV) ^[17] "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **New International Version**

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So what does this mean? Simply put, there is always a penalty when we break God's laws either as individuals, or as a nation. Just because we now can receive forgiveness through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we do not have a license to sin. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in the book of Romans.

Romans-6:1-2-(KJV)

^[1] What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ^[2] God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

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Continuing in **Jeremiah 25:8** and through to **verse 10** we read the following:

Jeremiah-25:8-(NIV)

^[8] Therefore the Lord Almighty says this: "Because you have not listened to my words, ^[9] I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the Lord, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. ^[10] I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. **New International Version** Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. All rights reserved. Database © 2012 WORDsearch Corp.

We have now come to the reason for the title of this chapter . . . "The Light of the World." The last four words in verse ten (light of the lamp) hit me in the face and God gave me an illustration that I need to share with everyone. . . "Lightning Bugs!"

Both me and my wife, and I know many of you reading this, have been struggling with the question; "why is our nation and the rest of the world going to hell in a hand basket" to use an old phrase? The answer is simple. **It's OUR FAULT!**

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

^[14] "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ^[15]
Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

^[16] In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. **New International Version** Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. All rights reserved. Database © 2012 WORDsearch Corp.

By now you must be thinking, "so what about the lightning bugs?" As Jesus stated to his followers, "You are the light of the world," and you (we all) are if we claim to follow God. However, we also have become inconsistent and divided lights most of the time. We are like lightning bugs occasionally blinking on and off, except our light in this case is the light of God's word! At any given evening in the summer, how many lightning bugs would you estimate are out and about flashing away to their hearts content...Millions? I would venture to say, "more like billions!" We see their fleeting lights but they are not bright enough, and their light doesn't last long enough to overcome the vast darkness surrounding them. We all as children have spent many a summer' night collecting lightning bugs. I remember one time I had caught so many that their collective light actually started to illuminate things around the jar I kept them in!

Enough of them were flashing in unison that their light intensity was thereby multiplied! So what lesson can we learn from lightning bugs that apply to us and the direction church and the world are headed? First, let's look at the lone lightning bug.

If someone blinks his or her eyes just as a lightning bug flashes, its light may go totally un-noticed. If a few lightning bugs are close together flashing randomly, we may be aware of them but their light is still no match for the darkness of their environment. We also are unable to see where they are, or where they are going until they flash their light again. Another interesting observation I have made is that some flash often while others not so often.

If we gather them together, their light can be magnified as many of them begin to flash their light in unison. If we could only teach them to flash in unison all the time, better yet, to keep their light on consistently, we would have an effective lantern to overcome the darkness and guide us through the night! Unfortunately, as it is with lightning bugs, a lot of us who claim to be Christians (or Christ Followers), have kept our light (the light of the Gospel) hidden. Either we have kept it to ourselves or we just don't allow it to flash very often if at all. While Satan was busy at work distorting the Good News of Jesus Christ and spreading darkness and evil, where was our light? We, the church, have failed in our mission of spreading the light of God's word. When Satan formed groups of his disciples, into Cults attacking the Bible, we remained silent. When Satan started tearing apart families, then hooking people on drugs, alcohol, and pornography, a few of us flashed the light of the Gospel randomly, but not in large enough numbers. We did not respond with enough intensity to overcome the vast darkness infecting the world. The Church has to be a light to the world full time . . . not just one or two days a week . . . not just occasionally, but always.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Edmund Burke