

### Jeremiah's First Prophecy of Judgment

#### Jeremiah 2

**Jeremiah 2:1-19** - *"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup> 'Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. <sup>3</sup> Israel was holiness to the Lord, the first-fruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend. Disaster will come upon them," says the Lord.'"*

*<sup>4</sup> Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord: "What injustice have your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, have followed idols, and have become idolaters?*

*<sup>6</sup> Neither did they say, 'Where is the Lord, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and pits, through a land of drought and the shadow of death, through a land that no one crossed and where no one dwelt?' <sup>7</sup> I brought you into a bountiful country, to eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land and made My heritage an abomination. <sup>8</sup> The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' And those who handle the law did not know Me. The rulers also transgressed against Me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.*

*<sup>9</sup> "Therefore I will yet bring charges against you," says the Lord, "and against your children's children I will bring charges.*

*<sup>10</sup> For pass beyond the coasts of Cyprus and see; send to Kedar and consider diligently, and see if there has been such a thing. <sup>11</sup> Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit.*

*<sup>12</sup> Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid. Be very desolate," says the Lord. <sup>13</sup> "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.*

*<sup>14</sup> "Is Israel a servant? Is he a home born slave? Why is he plundered? <sup>15</sup> The young lions roared at him, and growled.*

*They made his land waste; his cities are burned, without inhabitant. <sup>16</sup> Also the people of Noph and Tahpanhes have*

*broken the crown of your head. <sup>17</sup> Have you not brought this on yourself, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God*

*when He led you in the way? <sup>18</sup> And now why take the road to Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or why take the road*

*to Assyria, to drink the waters of the River? <sup>19</sup> Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke*

*you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken the Lord your God, and the fear of Me is not in you," says the Lord God of hosts."*

#### Background Notes

In Jeremiah 1 we discussed the call and commission of Jeremiah. Jeremiah ministered in Jerusalem during the years leading up to the Babylonian captivity. He had an unpleasant ministry, because his message consisted primarily of pronouncing God's coming judgment upon His people for their sins against Him.

Although there are some encouraging passages in Jeremiah, there are a lot of judgment prophecies in this book. But this in itself should be a lesson to us. God hates sin! He must denounce and judge it - then, and today, and always. Jeremiah 2 is his first prophecy of judgment concerning the kingdom of Judah.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Judah left her first love and the Fountain of Living Waters.

Jeremiah 2 began with the good news (v1-3). God looked back on the early years of the nation as a honeymoon period. God lovingly brought His people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, and He had provided for them in the wilderness, and protected them from their enemies. Even though Israel had to be disciplined for her sins in the wilderness (including the golden calf incident), they had not yet turned as a nation to the foreign gods of the surrounding nations. But when they came into the Land they left their “first love” and turned to the gods of the pagan nations around them. The honeymoon was over.

In verses 4-7 the Lord asked Israel what was the reason for forsaking Him. He had provided for them and protected them in the wilderness, and He had brought them into a fruitful land. But not only the people had turned away from the Lord, but the priests, the civil leaders, and the prophets as well (v8).

In verses 9-14, the Lord said that one could search from Cyprus in the west to Arabia in the east and not find another nation that had given up its gods - but ***Israel had forsaken the Living God!*** They had committed two evils: they had turned away from the Lord as the Fountain of Living Waters, and they had tried to quench their spiritual thirst from self-made cisterns. But the cisterns were broken, and could not hold water.

The imagery continued in verses 14-18. In their search for “water,” the people of Judah had turned to the Nile of Egypt and the Euphrates of Assyria – even though the young lions of Assyria had already conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, and had roared at Judah (v15)! They had turned to Egypt, even though the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes had attacked and defeated Judah (v16). For such apostasy, Judah would reap what she had sown (v19). Some would be taken as prisoners to Babylon on the Euphrates. Others would run for “safety” to Egypt and the Nile - and die there.

This did not have to happen – but it happened because Judah left her first love and the Fountain of Living Waters.

### 2. Judah turned to the immorality and idolatry of foreign nations.

Idolatry and sexual immorality were closely connected in the ancient foreign religions. This is true today in false religions - and secular humanism. God had planted Israel as a choice vine in the Land, but they had become a wild degenerate vine with no good fruit. They had practiced literal idol-worship and sexual immorality like the Canaanites they had conquered.

**Jeremiah 2:2-25** - *“For of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bonds; and you said, ‘I will not transgress,’ when on every high hill and under every green tree you lay down, playing the harlot. <sup>21</sup> Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality.*

*How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? <sup>22</sup> For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me,” says the Lord God. <sup>23</sup> “How can you say, ‘I am not polluted - I have not gone after the Baals’? See your way in the valley; know what you have done. You are a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways, <sup>24</sup> a wild donkey used to the wilderness that sniffs at the wind in her desire. In her time of mating, who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they will find her.*

*<sup>25</sup> Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst. But you said, ‘There is no hope. No! For I have loved aliens, and after them I will go.’”*

Israel was still trying to deny her wrongdoing, but God said they were entangled in sin that they could not wash away. In verses 24 and 25, Judah’s spiritual adultery was likened to a wild female donkey in heat. Judah would not become domesticated – she ran after idolatrous strangers.

**Jeremiah 2:26-31** - *“As the thief is ashamed when he is found out, so is the house of Israel ashamed. They and their kings and their princes, and their priests and their prophets, <sup>27</sup> saying to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ and to a stone, ‘You gave birth to me.’ For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face - but in the time of their trouble they will say, ‘Arise and save us!’ <sup>28</sup> But where are your gods that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble. For according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah.” <sup>29</sup> “Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me,” says the Lord. <sup>30</sup> “In vain I have chastened your children; they received no correction. Your sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion.*

*<sup>31</sup> “O generation, see the word of the Lord! Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of darkness? Why do My people say, ‘We are lords; we will come no more to You’?”*

God had exposed the shame and futility of Israel’s idolatry. This is true today as well. When people turn away from the Lord, the Lord lets them see the futility of the gods that they hold in high esteem, like the gods of success and money and materialism and sexual “freedom.” In verses 29-31, the Lord said that Israel had no excuses – and no case in God’s court. God had given them His Law. He had sent them His prophets. They had experienced God’s discipline. But they had turned from His Law, killed His prophets (including Isaiah), and they didn’t respond to His discipline. They turned further away.

**Jeremiah 2:32-37** - *“Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number. <sup>33</sup> “Why do you beautify your way to seek love? Therefore you have also taught the wicked women your ways. <sup>34</sup> Also on your skirts is found the blood of the lives of the poor innocents. I have not found it by secret search, but plainly on all these things. <sup>35</sup> Yet you say, ‘Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me.’ Behold, I will plead My case against you, because you say, ‘I have not sinned.’*

<sup>36</sup> *Why do you gad about so much to change your way? Also you shall be ashamed of Egypt, as you were ashamed of Assyria. <sup>37</sup> Indeed you will go forth from him with your hands on your head; for the Lord has rejected your trusted allies, and you will not prosper by them."*

In verses 29-32, the Lord likened Judah to a young bride who forgot her wedding and turned away from her vows - to adultery, and even to wicked prostitution. In civil affairs, Judah had actually put innocent people to death - yet claimed she was still innocent (v34-35). Judah had looked to both Egypt and Assyria for help and safety, instead of looking to the Lord. As a result, they would go as prisoners to Babylon (v36-37).

What a sad commentary, after such a promising beginning! Judah turned to the immorality and idolatry of the foreign nations.

## **Practical Application**

### **Don't look for water in broken cisterns!**

This directive can be applied to us as individuals or to nations. Our nation has turned from the Fountain of Living Waters to the cisterns of secular humanism - but the cisterns of secular humanism are cracked and broken!

Regardless of how much so-called "freedom" is offered from these self-made cisterns, complete fulfillment and satisfaction can never be obtained apart from the Fountain of Living Waters. Lapping the stagnant muddy waters of these broken cisterns not only fails to quench spiritual thirst - it ultimately leads to the poison of dehumanization.

Look at the murky waters of the man-made cistern of evolution. Compare it to the clear biblical teaching of the majestic beginnings of mankind - created in the image of God!

Look, too, at the results if drinking at the humanistic cistern of sexual freedom. It results in disillusion, disease, and the heartbreak of shattered individuals, marriages and families.

Don't look for water in broken cisterns!