

LIVING WATERS OR BROKEN CISTERNS?

BIBLE TEXT : Jeremiah 2:1-30

LESSON 393 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Jeremiah 2:1-30

1 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land *that was* not sown.

3 Israel *was* holiness unto the LORD, *and* the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

4 Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:

5 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

6 Neither said they, Where *is* the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

8 The priests said not, Where *is* the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after *things that do* not profit.

Bible References:

Notes:

Jeremiah

One of the prophets of the Lord was named Jeremiah. God chose him to deliver His message to the Children of Israel. At first Jeremiah felt that he could not preach. He said, "I can-not speak: for I am a child" (Jeremiah 1:6). No doubt, Jeremiah meant that he had not had much experience, and he was humble. The Lord said that He had put His words in Jeremiah's mouth and that He would be with him.

This was the call of God to Jeremiah. The message that he was to take to Israel was not a pleasant one. It was judgment against their sins. But this was the work that God gave Jeremiah, and he was obedient to the Lord. God expects His people to obey Him, even though the work might be difficult or dangerous. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Wickedness

God sent Jeremiah to warn the people against judgment for all their wickedness. Some people seem to think that God will not punish them, because they do not do the things they once did, even though they still have some sins. Some people hope that God will not send judgment, because they are not doing the same sinful things that other people do. But the Bible teaches that even one sin will cut us off from God. We will be judged by the words Jesus spoke (**John 12:48** ⁴⁸ He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.), and not by the lives of other people. Jeremiah preached against **all** wickedness, and warned the people that they would become captives because of their wickedness.

Remember

Jeremiah told the people that God remembered that they used to serve the Lord and love Him. At one time the Children of Israel had believed and worshiped God (**Exodus 4:31** ³¹ And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.). They had promised Joshua, "The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey" (Joshua 24:24). The people seemed to forget all those things, but God remembered.

It is possible today for people to turn from God, and to forget their promises to Him. It is good to consider our love for God, and how we are serving Him. Are we still praying as earnestly as when we first started to pray? Sometimes we like to look back and consider how God has led us and what He has done for us. The Prophet Isaiah said, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged" (Isaiah 51:1). When one does that, praises begin to come into his heart and he is thankful to God for his blessings. Instead of praising God, the Children of Israel forsook Him and they were punished.

Consider

The Lord asked the people to think about the way they had treated Him, and if He deserved to be treated that way. What had God done? Why did they forsake Him? Jeremiah said that

9 Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

11 Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit.

12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

14 *Is* Israel a servant? *is* he a homeborn *slave*? why is he spoiled?

15 The young lions roared upon him, *and* yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

16 Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

17 Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?

18 And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear *is* not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

20 For of old time I have broken thy yoke, *and* burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high

God had planted Israel as a "noble vine" and a "right seed." But Israel had turned into a strange vine. That is not natural. When one plants a good seed or a good vine, he has a right to expect it to become a good plant, which does not change. Wickedness caused Israel to become a "strange vine."

Another prophet likened the Children of Israel to a vineyard. He told how God had taken good care of it only to find wild grapes at harvest time instead of good fruit. At that time God asked what more could He have done (Isaiah 5:4). There was no answer, because He had done all that was necessary for them. The failure was on their part.

What more can God do for our redemption? God has sent His Son Jesus Christ to give His life that all people might be saved. God has made a way that we might have our sins forgiven and live for Him. The Lord has promised to be with His followers "always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). Still some people are not saved, and others who have been saved have forsaken the Lord.

Wells of Water

Jeremiah reminded them how God had led the Children of Israel into Canaan, the Promised Land. They had agreed to keep the commandments of the Lord and to do good in His sight. Then they would possess the land and drive out their enemies.

The land of Canaan was a wonderful place. When the people obeyed God, He gave them cities already built, houses full of good things, vineyards already planted, and wells already dug. Wells are very important because people, animals, and plants cannot live very long without moisture and water.

Spiritual Water

In our Christian life we need spiritual Water. Jesus taught that He is the Water of Life. If one has Jesus in his heart, he will have spiritual Water to keep his thirsty soul alive. Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38), and, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The Prophet Isaiah was inviting people to come to the Lord when he wrote, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1). In the last chapter of the Bible we read also: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

Water Supply

We can get water from different places. Perhaps you just turn a faucet and water flows out because the pipe is connected to the pump and the water supply tank. Maybe in the hills you have seen a spring, which came out of the hillside; and out of it flowed a cool, sparkling stream. But when the summer comes and there is no rain, many springs and streams dry up. So wells are dug deep to reach an underground supply of water. If the well is put in the right place to tap the supply, there will be water for the people and animals.

In some places it is hard to find an underground supply, so cisterns are dug and filled with rain water or water from somewhere else. A cistern is like a storage tank to hold water that has been put there. It must be lined with rocks, bricks, or concrete to keep the water from seeping out. A cistern does not fill itself but a well has water flowing into it naturally.

The Bible teaches that salvation is like a well. Once dug and connected to Christ the Living Water, there is always a supply springing up without priming and pumping.

Jeremiah said that the Children of Israel had committed two evils. One, they had turned from the fountain of living waters of

hill and under every green tree
thou wanderest, playing the
harlot.

21 Yet I had planted thee a noble
vine, wholly a right seed: how
then art thou turned into the
degenerate plant of a strange vine
unto me?

22 For though thou wash thee
with nitre, and take thee much
soap, *yet* thine iniquity is marked
before me, saith the Lord GOD.

23 How canst thou say, I am not
polluted, I have not gone after
Baalim? see thy way in the valley,
know what thou hast done: *thou*
art a swift dromedary traversing
her ways;

24 A wild ass used to the
wilderness, *that* snuffeth up the
wind at her pleasure; in her
occasion who can turn her away?
all they that seek her will not
weary themselves; in her month
they shall find her.

25 Withhold thy foot from being
unshod, and thy throat from thirst:
but thou saidst, There is no hope:
no; for I have loved strangers, and
after them will I go.

26 As the thief is ashamed when
he is found, so is the house of
Israel ashamed; they, their kings,
their princes, and their priests, and
their prophets,

27 Saying to a stock, Thou *art* my
father; and to a stone, Thou hast
brought me forth: for they have
turned *their* back unto me, and
not *their* face: but in the time of
their trouble they will say, Arise,
and save us.

28 But where *are* thy gods that
thou hast made thee? let them
arise, if they can save thee in the
time of thy trouble: for *according*
to the number of thy cities are thy
gods, O Judah.

29 Wherefore will ye plead with
me? ye all have transgressed
against me, saith the LORD.

30 In vain have I smitten your

salvation. Two, they had made cisterns for themselves — cracked
and leaking cisterns, at that! Jeremiah declared that the people
had turned from the Lord who is the only One who can give
eternal life. They had sinned more when they substituted idols
and something else in the place of the true worship of God. The
Bible tells about people who have a “form of godliness” but deny
the power of God (II Timothy 3:5).

A Dry Cistern

Think how disappointing and deadly! Suppose you were
almost dying from thirst and then found a cistern. It would look
almost like a well, and from the outside one could not tell if there
was water. How your hopes would be raised and you would think
that now you would be safe! But what dis-appointment and
despair you would suffer if, when you looked into the cistern, you
found it cracked and dry! The empty cistern could not help you.
So it is in the spiritual things, too. Only the true Water of Life can
bring eternal life.

Jesus tells about the people who are religious but not attached
to Him. They may work hard and long but when they stand
before Him they will not be accepted. He will say, “I never knew
you: depart from me” (Matthew 7:23). Let us take a warning
from Jeremiah and be sure that we are drinking from the Fountain
of Life, which is Christ Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus said, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give
him shall never thirst” (John 4:14). A person cannot be
completely satisfied until he has Jesus in his life.

Sin

In Romans 3:23 we read, “For all have sinned, and come short
of the glory of God.” Jesus came to save us from sin, and He
shows people their need to confess and forsake their sins. There
are just two kinds of people, the saved and the unsaved. Many
people know that they sin. Some of them know that they can
pray and have their sins forgiven. But to know these things and
to do them are not the same. Although some people try to get rid
of their sins in different ways, there is only one way. The Blood of
Jesus will cover sins, blot them out, and cleanse a person from all
unrighteousness.

This message Jeremiah gave the people, “For though thou
wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity
is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.” Nitre was like a
scouring powder. It may help take dirt off some things but it will
not wash away sin. Some soaps are so strong that they almost
take away a layer of skin from the hands but they will not cleanse
from sin.

Clean Hands

There was a man named Pilate who knew that he had done
wrong. In front of the people he washed his hands in a basin and
said, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person” (Matthew
27:24). He thought that his hands were cleaned, but the mark of
sin was still there.

The Psalmist asked, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the
LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?” He wanted to know
who was going to Heaven. Then came the answer, “He that hath
clean hands, and a pure heart” (Psalm 24:4). If you want to go
to Heaven some day, see that the things you do with your hands
are clean and that your heart is pure by obeying God and being
washed in the Blood of Jesus.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Jeremiah?
2. What kind of message did Jeremiah give to the people?
3. To whom did God send him?
4. What wickedness had Judah done?

children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

5. What were the two evils the people had committed?
6. Who is the Living Water?
7. What is the difference between a well and a cistern?
8. Although nitre and soap cannot wash away sin, what can do it?
9. God planted a noble vine but what kind of vine did Israel become?
10. What more could God have done to help Israel?