

Jeremiah 2

part 2

Jeremiah confronts Israel with her sin in this message. This is the major emphasis in this book with little mention of Messiah. The call is to turn back to God. The phrase "thus saith the LORD" is used 153 times in this book (the rest of the prophetic books it is used a total of 74 times). Perhaps the reason for the emphasis on "thus saith the LORD" is the message Jeremiah is delivering is one of sin and judgment, with a minimal referral to Messiah and hope, so there is a need to emphasize this message is from God. Perhaps the reason for the minimal reference to Messiah and hope is "the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy," 2 Chronicles 36:16.

ISRAEL HAS FORSAKEN GOD FOR EMPTY RELIGION

- 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.

Vs. 9 At this point, God is still pleading with Israel to turn back to Him. "I will yet" refers back to the abandonment of truth (and God) by the politicians, religious leaders, prophets, and the people (Jeremiah 1:18).

Vs. 10 Israel is charged with searching from the west ("isles of Chittim") to the east ("Kedar"), and to "consider diligently" if any nation has forsaken their god.

Vs. 11 Has any nation ever changed their [false] gods for another god? NO. Changed their glory for something that doesn't profit? NO.

Isaiah 44:23 "Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

Isaiah 46:13 "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."

Except Israel has done that very thing - "changed their glory" for "that which does not profit."

Psalm 106:20 "Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass."

Hosea 4:7 "As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame."

Vs. 12 The appeal is to an inanimate object that consistently obeys. Three strong terms are used:
 Be astonished; Be horribly afraid; Be very desolate.

The same statement about Israel was made by Isaiah.

Isaiah 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.
 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Vs. 13 Two evils are committed.

"They have forsaken me"

"They have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns"

There are two realities in what Israel did.

1. The turned from God who is a fountain of living water to a broken cistern that can't provide water.

Psalm 36:9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

Isaiah 12:3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 7:37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.
2. They adopted empty (vain) religious practices

Mark 5: Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Whenever there is a turning away from something there is a turning toward something else.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 "...how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

ISRAEL'S BACKSLIDING

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

Israel was brought into this world to be God's nation, His people. God refers to Israel as His son.

Exodus 4:22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.

Why did Israel become a spoil/plundered by her enemies? The answer follows in verse 17.

Believers are free in Messiah.

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

HERE IS THE PARADOX!

Believers are free when they become slaves

Romans 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.
18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

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

The young lions are the nations (Assyria and Egypt) that have plundered Israel.

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

Noph and Tahapanes are cities in Egypt. "The crown of thy head" most likely is a reference to Josiah who was killed by the Egyptians under the reign of Neco at Meggido(2 Kings 23:29).

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

The cause of Israel's plundering was their own. They forsook God. God led them by the correct **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?

Israel had "better" ideas in the **way** to go by putting their trust in politics - alliances with Egypt and Assyria.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

"Waters of Sihor" - the Nile river

"The ancient Egyptians called the river Ar or Aur (Coptic: Iaro), "Black," in allusion to the colour of the sediments carried by the river when it is in flood. Nile mud is black enough to have given the land itself its oldest name, Kem or Kemi, which also means "black" and signifies darkness."
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Nile-River>

"Waters of the river" - the Euphrates

The contrast in this verse is the "waters" of strong nations providing Israel's needs vs the "fountain of living waters" of God providing their needs, vs. 13.

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.

Isaiah 30:1 Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:
2 That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!
3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.

Psalms 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?
5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.
7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

"In Jeremiah's day there were two chief political parties, a pro-Egyptian one and a pro-Assyrian one. Of what help would godless nations be to Judah? Ultimately, her doom would be sealed, not by the presence or absence of treaties with allies, but by her defection from the Lord (vs. 19)."

Charles L. Feinberg, Jeremiah: A Commentary, page 36

Comparing the plight of the U.S. with the plight of Israel can be perilous in itself as Israel, and Israel alone, is God's covenant nation, Amos 3:1-2. But there is a lesson that can be applied.

Proverbs 14:34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

"Righteousness is the only foundation of permanent national prosperity. No outward greatness can save a wicked people from ruin." Family Bible Notes

"This proverb is verified in the whole history of the nation of Israel, and in those promises and threatenings that received their fulfilment in the events which befell them.

Some allege, that God dispenses no rewards and punishments to the nations, but such as are the native consequences of their behaviour, without any particular direction of providence, from a regard to their good or bad conduct; and that the history of the things that befell Israel as a nation, affords no ensample unto nations that are not under the Mosaic covenant. But, besides that Providence has affixed prosperity or misery to virtue or vice, as their natural consequences, we find God punishing many nations on account of their sins, by calamities that were not the native results of their sins. The histories of Genesis, and Exodus, and Joshua, and the predictions of all the prophets concerning the heathen nations, might be quoted in proof of this point: and even under the New Testament, we find prophecies of the miseries that would come upon public bodies for their sins.

Great is the regard which a righteous God has for righteousness. The virtue even of heathen nations has been rewarded with prosperity, and their vices have brought reproach and ruin on them. Righteousness, such as heathens could practice, made Greece and Rome to flourish, and exalted them to glory. But the last of these nations, after it was advanced to the highest pitch of worldly grandeur, was soon brought to extreme misery, and debased to the most wretched servitude, when corruption and wickedness, in opposition to the dictates of natural light, was become common in it. Let us all, therefore, if we love our country, oppose wickedness to the utmost of our power, for a remnant of righteous persons may sometimes prove for a time the pillars of a land.

It is the interest of kings to promote righteousness, and to discourage iniquity among their subjects; and this they will do, if they deserve that noble title."

Exposition of the Book of Proverbs Volume 1, Rev. George Lawson, 1821

As God used Israel's sin to awaken her to her plight, God can use the very sin of a person to bring about their conviction of their sin.

- Luke 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.
- 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.
- 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.
- 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.
- 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!
- 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"Fundamentally, Israel lacks the fear and awe of the LORD...Failure to revere God was the cause of apostasy... As explicated by Matthew Henry, 'this is at the bottom of our apostasy from him; men forsake their duty to God because they stand in no awe of him nor have any dread of his displeasure.'"

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Jeremiah-Ezekiel, page 93