

A CHARACTER STUDY OF
THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

Lesson 7

BROKEN CISTERNS

*“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.”*

Jeremiah 2: 13

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BROKEN CISTERNS

“Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.”

Jeremiah 1:17

The spiritual climate in Israel in the days of Jeremiah was very dismal. The people felt that they did not need God. There were difficulties in their lives but they felt that they could handle anything. They had money for any need and an army to face any outside foe. They did not live in a way that recognized God at all. They had adopted the gods of the pagan nations all around them and had, in fact, rejected the God who brought them out of Egypt, the land of slavery. He brought them into the promised land of Canaan. God planned to bring a bold prophet on to the scene who would cry out against their apostasy and call them back to faith in Jehovah. Jeremiah was that prophet. He was chosen to be that prophet even before he was born. God’s promise to His

prophet was *“Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.”* (Vs. 1:8) He also told Jeremiah *“I have put my words in thy mouth.”* (Vs 1:9) God promised Jeremiah that He would always “deliver” or rescue him, no matter how much the people hated him because of his message. He would never be alone. His command to Jeremiah was *“Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee:”* (Vs. 17)

We find the first message that Jeremiah preached to the people in Jeremiah chapter 2. The people had strayed away from the true worship of Jehovah. God exclaims incredulously, *“Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.”* (Vs. 2:13) His question is, “What other nations have changed their gods?” The rhetorical answer is, “None of them.” Yet, the people of God have changed their worship of the true God of Heaven for gods that have no value and

could never help them. Jeremiah proclaims that the people have committed two sins. They have forsaken the God who is the true “fountain of living waters” and in His place have embraced false gods who are like broken cisterns. “And they had pursued idols who, like broken cisterns, could not even hold water— much less provide it. The most reliable source of water in Israel was a natural spring, and the least reliable was a cistern.” (Constable. P. 51-52) This is a very vivid image to illustrate the spiritual depravity to which God’s people had sunk. “The best cisterns, even those in solid rock, are strangely liable to crack, and are at most an unreliable source of supply of that absolutely indispensable article, water; and if, by constant care, they are made to hold, yet the water, collected from clay roofs or from marly soil, has the color of weak soapsuds, the taste of the earth or the stable, is full of worms, and in the hour of greatest need it utterly fails. Who but a fool or one gone mad in love of filth, would exchange the sweet, wholesome stream of a

living fountain for such an uncertain compound of nastiness and vermin!" (Constable. Quoting Thompson. P. 52.) Because of their apostasy God had judged them and decided that He would allow the Babylonians to conquer the people and carry them into exile in Babylon. Jeremiah's message is for the people to submit to the plan that God had for them so they would be safe and would one day return to start the nation again. His message was not well received and that was why his work was so difficult.

The image of a broken cistern is valuable for believers today. God has been so good to us, and yet, we find that our nature is to wander away from the true "fountain of living waters", the Lord Jesus. When He spoke to the woman at the well in John 4, He said, *"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. 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? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 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 4:10-14) Later in John chapter 7 Jesus calls to the people and says, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37-38)

Since the Lord has done so many wonderful things for His people, why are we so prone to be drawn back to the world and all its filth? Like the ancient Israelites, we try to dig for ourselves cisterns that hold no good water.

“Prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it.
Prone to leave the God I love.”
(John Wyeth)

Child of God, let's be careful to be true to the God of our salvation. The Lord Jesus Loves us and has the best for us.

Jeremiah preached and called to a rebellious people. He is to us today an example of faithfulness, even with less than successful results. Let us remain faithful in our walk and work for the Savior.

NOTES

SOURCES

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