

Jeremiah 2

Read Jeremiah 2:1-3: Jeremiah is speaking for God. He is like a traffic cop re-directing traffic to turn around. They are going the wrong way down a one-way street. He is asking the Jews why they walked away from their relationship with God. He is using the metaphor of a wife leaving her husband. God was the husband of Judah and Israel. He loved them and cared for them, and he protected and provided for them. He is asking why his wife has left him.

He reflects on the intimacy they had on their honeymoon. They were in awe of him and wanted to be associated with him. They were loyal and proud of their spouse. The question becomes...when did this happen? When was Israel or Judah ever truly in love with God? This cannot be prior to going into Egypt, because they were not even a nation yet. It also could not have been for most of the 40 years in the wilderness. That was a faithless and frustrating journey.

“This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’ “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: ‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’ (Acts 7:37-43)

“You came down also on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven, And gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, By the hand of Moses Your servant. You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, And brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, And told them to go in to possess the land Which You had sworn to give them. “But they and our fathers acted proudly, Hardened their necks, And did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them. “Even when they made a molded calf for themselves, And said, ‘This is your god That brought you up out of Egypt,’ And worked great provocations, (Nehemiah 9:13-18)

I believe that this love affair with God happened at the end of the 40 year journey, as they got ready to cross the Jordan River. Jeremiah states that they were still in the wilderness when this happened. The old and faithless generation died. They were told that they could not go in because they had no faith. Jesus says in Revelation 3 that he wishes that we were hot or cold; because lukewarmness makes him sick. The prideful notion that there was something godly or special about the children of Israel was crippling them. This fresh-start unjaded new generation (who had no such identity or hang ups) was now in place to move into a more abundant life and faith walk with Joshua.

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her. I will give her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. “And it shall be, in that day,” Says the LORD, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ And no longer call Me My Master,’ For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more. (Hosea 2:14-17)

The children of Israel were fighting for their lives against the Canaanites. This tension for survival seems to be the best place for our faith. This remained intact until Joshua died. Then things went downhill pretty fast. The book of Judges is about faithlessness among the tribes, until they got attacked.

Joshua was not a preacher or an evangelist or Law giver. He was just faithfully executing his duties. He led by example. This should encourage all of us who do not find ourselves behind a microphone. Our daily walk might be more evangelical than we thought.

This new love for God that started near the Jordan River continued as this new ‘virgin’ generation crossed into Canaan. They were like little babies in so many ways. God describes them as little girls that matured into young wives. They had a simple outlook.

They were outmatched like grasshoppers compared to the giants and warlords they were marching towards. They were naive and simple. They were a blank slate. God was able to take them by the hand and keep in close contact as they were in life and death situations daily. Jesus speaks of the childlike faith that includes not over-thinking it.

Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: “Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. “And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured,

and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. “When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,” says the Lord GOD. “Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you,” says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 16:1-14)

Read Jeremiah 2: 4-13: God is asking a rhetorical question as a husband would question an unfaithful wife. “What did I do wrong?” Why did you chase make-believe idols instead? Did I abandon you or not feed you in the desert? Did I not protect you in the desert? Didn’t I take you to a bountiful land?

You came to my special property, which I had set aside to build a life and family together. You brought filth into the family property, where everyone else is living. You acted like I was not here living with you. You pursued Baal; and developed that imaginary relationship right in front of my eyes. I have been completely disrespected and ignored, in favor of awful alternatives that are not even functional.

God brings his charges. Point out any nation in the world who has changed their gods? Not the Babylonians, or any indigenous group! Buddhists do not convert to Islam! It is just not a thing that happens. On top of that, I am the only real god. God calls angels to look at this crazy and inexplicable spectacle. This misdirection and poor decision making will result in catastrophe. The people have committed two sins:

1. They have forsaken the real God, who gives life and provisions
2. They have made these idols their survival plan.

The children of Israel lived in a desert. Water cisterns (underground holding tanks carved in rock) were key to survival in this arid land. Like water storage, God is supposed to be their source of life and reliance. Clinging to an idol is like trying to live off of a broken (leaky) cistern. It does not hold anything for you to live on.

One reason that the children of Israel had so many problems is to show them that these idols cannot save them. It is what is called tough love. God lets us get into situations where we need to get saved, to remind us that he is the one taking care of us.

All of the surrounding nations knew very well that God was with the children of Israel. And yet, God's people took it for granted. It is embarrassing when unbelievers can clearly see that you need to repent. There are many places when Judah's invaders knew that the God of Israel was directing them to clean house. The surrounding nations also saw that God was doing real things...not imaginary folklore.

"I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. (Joshua 2:9-12)

It was a brief honeymoon. Once they set their swords down and partook of the good life; they lost their sense of urgency for God's help. We wonder why one trial leads to the next. This is one good reason. We cannot maintain a *high altitude* or easy living for long.

Somehow, the priesthood became a job that does not require faith. It became a set of rules and procedures to strictly carry out. It is a ridiculous set of responsibilities if you do not believe in it. The priests even went after Baal worship. How can people who spend every day in the bible do that? For starters, it cannot be personal or relational.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24)

A faithless priest is worthless and even damaging. You cannot share what you do not possess. It can never be an academic exercise.

No other nation has changed gods before. Perhaps this shows how much the demonic world is investing defense against Israel and the church.

God is asking why Israel is being abused and pummeled with problems. It is not because God does not care. He is letting the dark forces prove that Baal and good works are both dead ends that cannot help them.

Read Jeremiah 2:15-20: This is like a response to a Dear John letter. God is asking what he has done to justify being left by his bride. He compares Judah's reliance on Egypt and Assyria to a wife having the neighbor's step into her husband's role. Israel and Judah did not turn to God to solve their problems. Egypt and Assyria had money and troops. That seemed like an easy solution. It was a horrible choice. Even Solomon had all kinds of problems that came from his foreign alliances.

Israel and Judah were heavy in sin; which led to all kinds of predicaments. God has built causes and effects into this world for bad behavior. Instead of repenting and turning to God,

they made deals with idolatrous nations. These new relationships became very abusive and resulted in making things even worse. Judah was compared to a prostitute who worked for free.

Read Jeremiah 2:21-25: God is telling us that he picked Abram as a choice man to start a new nation. Abram is compared to a select vineyard planting. His descendants were placed in the best growing situation. Israel is compared to the resulting vineyard. God was like a farmer looking forward to producing some good wine. God fenced it off (protection) and watered it and cared for it...but it produced sour grapes. Israel has been a bitter reality for God. There is not much pleasant there to savor. It is just taking up space and valuable resources.

The people and religious leaders try to formulate ways to remove the continuum of curses, by outward appearances and good works. God is throwing out U-turn signs in every aspect of their life.

They not only chased evil nations with envy and desire. They were like a camel or wild donkey in heat, running around looking for a male. You could not be stopped with any logic. You were drunk with desire and imaginary outcomes.

When God tried to help amidst all of these self-created catastrophes, the people said there is no hope...and rejected God's help.

Read Jeremiah 2:26-31: This abnormal behavior in Israel went on and on because God gave them a long leash. They thought that they could just join another family and erase their history. God let them find a new daddy; and then he showed them that their cartoon daddy cannot help a bit. It does not matter if their idol is carved out of wood or chiseled in stone. It does not matter if it is associated with a planet or star or animal. It's all make believe.

Read Jeremiah 2:32-37: God cannot forget his love for his unfaithful wife. The book of Hosea is all about God's prostitute wife who left him for others...but he bought her back out of slavery to start again.

When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: *"Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry, For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from the LORD."... Say to your brethren, 'My people,'*

And to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.' "Bring charges against your mother, bring charges;

For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight,

And her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked And expose her, as in the day she was

born, And make her like a wilderness, And set her like a dry land, And slay her with thirst. "I will not have

mercy on her children, For they are the children of harlotry. For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers,

Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my linen, My oil and my drink.' "Therefore, behold, I will

hedge up your way with thorns, And wall her in, So that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers,

But not overtake them; Yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to

my first husband, For then it was better for me than now.'

Jeremiah is all about tough love and hard laws for hard hearts.

*“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved
On the tablet of their heart, (Jeremiah 17:1)*