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## *Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah*

**As it was in Jeremiah's Day – So  
it is Today**

***September 20, 2020***

**Sermon Text:** Jeremiah 2

**Scripture Reading:** Jeremiah 1

Last time we saw some of the major players on the world scene in Jeremiah's day and how the southern kingdom of Judah where Jeremiah lived and ministered was literally in the middle of it.

- Assyria
- Babylon (the Chaldeans)
- Egypt

This morning I would like us to consider the state of affairs in Jerusalem and Judah itself, especially in respect to the nation's hardened, stubborn apostasy from God and the covenant by

which they were related to Him. We will see many parallels to the condition of our own nation today and we will gain a realistic assessment of what we can expect if we, as Jeremiah did, live and speak for the Lord.

Follow along as I read the second chapter –

Jeremiah 2:1-37 ESV The word of the LORD came to me, saying, (2) "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. (3) Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the LORD."

(4) Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. (5) Thus says the LORD: "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless? (6) They did not say, 'Where is the LORD who brought

us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?’

(7) And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things.

But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. (8) The priests did not say, ‘Where is the LORD?’ Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit. (9) “Therefore I still contend with you, declares the LORD, and with your children's children I will contend. (10) For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. (11) Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. (12) Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, (13) for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for

themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

(14) “Is Israel a slave? Is he a homeborn servant? Why then has he become a prey? (15) The lions have roared against him; they have roared loudly. They have made his land a waste; his cities are in ruins, without inhabitant. (16) Moreover, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have shaved the crown of your head. (17) Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD your God, when he led you in the way?

(18) And now what do you gain by going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates? (19) Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

(20) “For long ago I broke your yoke and burst your bonds; but you said, ‘I will not serve.’ Yes, on every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down like a whore. (21) Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate

and become a wild vine? (22) Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, declares the Lord GOD.

(23) How can you say, 'I am not unclean, I have not gone after the Baals'? Look at your way in the valley; know what you have done— a restless young camel running here and there, (24) a wild donkey used to the wilderness, in her heat sniffing the wind! Who can restrain her lust? None who seek her need weary themselves; in her month they will find her.

(25) Keep your feet from going unshod and your throat from thirst. But you said, 'It is hopeless, for I have loved foreigners, and after them I will go.' (26) "As a thief is shamed when caught, so the house of Israel shall be shamed: they, their kings, their officials, their priests, and their prophets, (27) who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth.' For they have turned their back to me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, 'Arise and save us!' (28) But where are your gods that you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O

Judah.

(29) "Why do you contend with me? You have all transgressed against me, declares the LORD. (30) In vain have I struck your children; they took no correction; your own sword devoured your prophets like a ravaging lion.

(31) And you, O generation, behold the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of thick darkness? Why then do my people say, 'We are free, we will come no more to you'? (32) Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

(33) "How well you direct your course to seek love! So that even to wicked women you have taught your ways. (34) Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor; you did not find them breaking in. Yet in spite of all these things (35) you say, 'I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me.' Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, 'I have not sinned.' (36) How much you go about, changing your way! You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria. (37) From it too you will come away with your hands on

your head, for the LORD has rejected those in whom you trust, and you will not prosper by them.

This is the target audience Jeremiah was called to announce God's Word to. That Word, as we have seen back in chapter one, is *powerful*. God speaks, and it is done. He watches over His word to perform it. Jeremiah therefore, speaks a divinely powerful word –

Jeremiah 1:9-10 ESV Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. (10) See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Let's look more closely at chapter 2 and the description of Judah's sin.

### **Refusal to Remember From Whence We Came**

Jeremiah 2:1-7 ESV The word of the LORD came to me, saying, (2) “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed

me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. (3) Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the LORD.”

(4) Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. (5) Thus says the LORD: “What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless? (6) They did not say, ‘Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?’ (7) And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination.

I will not equate the United States with Israel point by point. America is not a theocracy and never was. Our nation never stood in a formal covenant relationship with the Lord as was the case in Jeremiah's day. *However there are definite parallels and likenesses to be made if we are wise.* God is the King of every nation and He is to be

worshipped, obeyed, and given thanks. He offers every person in every nation a New Covenant in Jesus Christ His Son and there is still a blessing for obeying it (faith in Christ) and a curse for all who disobey it-

forsaking the LORD your God, when he led you in the way?

These preliminary judgments were brought upon them by the Lord with the intent of waking them up and causing them to repent. But they stubbornly had refused. So it is today increasingly in our own nation.

John 3:16-18 ESV “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

What should Judah have done? What should America do? The answer is this: *remember*. Remember who you were. Remember where you came from and how our nation even came into existence. In Judah’s case, those roots were centuries before in the days of the Exodus and God’s mighty deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. His presence with them in the wilderness and how He cared for them. How He brought them into the Canaan and gave it to them with all kinds of blessings.

Jeremiah’s nation of Judah was already suffering greatly –

(14) “Is Israel a slave? Is he a homeborn servant? Why then has he become a prey? (15) The lions have roared against him; they have roared loudly. They have made his land a waste; his cities are in ruins, without inhabitant. (16) Moreover, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have shaved the crown of your head. (17) Have you not brought this upon yourself by

And they needed to remember what happened to their fathers when those generations disobeyed the Lord. But what did they do? Even the priests and the prophets among them stubbornly refused to remember:

(6) They did not say, ‘Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness

since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

No. Instead, in the face of these judgments and invasions, they persisted in making gods for themselves and rejecting the Lord and His Law. They did not wake up and come to their senses and say, “Wait a minute! Where is the Lord? Remember what He did for us in the past? Why isn’t He blessing us now? What is wrong? We must have sinned.” But there will be none of that sanity in Jeremiah’s day and frankly I do not look for it on a wide scale in our day in this nation.

***There is no sinner so hardened in his wicked ways as the sinner who has lived in and enjoyed the blessings of the Lord and who yet insists on having his sin.***

Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance,

As we will see, it was the shepherds, the priests, the prophets who led the people in all these evils.

Refusal to remember. One of the primary ways we see this in our nation today is the re-writing of history. Not only was Judah’s forgetting of the Lord a passive forgetting, but they actively worked to suppress any memory of His wonderful blessings on them in the past. So it is today. What are our children being taught about the origins and founding of the United States? If evil has its way here as it did in Judah, any reference to the Lord will be erased. George Washington and other founding fathers will be described as evil, self-serving, wicked men. The Lord’s blessings in our past such as victory in the Revolutionary War, His deliverance of us in subsequent wars – are being forgotten.

This is what Jeremiah faced. It is what the Lord commissioned and called him to preach against right in the streets and even at the gates of the Temple – at the “church doors” as the people went in to “worship” as we might say.

Jeremiah's countrymen *refused to remember. They refused to remember the Lord and they refused to remember how He blessed them in the past.*

### **Exchanging The Glory of God for a Lie – Craving Worthless Idols**

Jeremiah 2:11-13 ESV Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. (12) Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, (13) for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

If there is one single sin – a foundational one from which all other evil proceeds – this is that sin. Idolatry. It is the sin that arouses God's wrath more than any other. This is what Judah had done:

Romans 1:24-25 ESV Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (25) because they exchanged the truth

about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

You see it here as Jeremiah describes it:

(7b) But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. (8) The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds transgressed against me; **the prophets prophesied by Baal** and went after things that do not profit.

(9) "Therefore I still contend with you, declares the LORD, and with your children's children I will contend. (10) For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. (11) **Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.**

(12) Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, (13) **for my people have committed two evils:** they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for

themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

You can see that the Lord Jesus had vs 12-13 in mind when He spoke with the woman at the well in John 4 –

John 4:13-14 ESV Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

This is the sin of our nation. Someone should write a book about it with the title – *The Great Exchange*. Or, *The Stupidest Transaction in History*. Here the people have the source of never ending living water, Christ Himself. And yet they reject Him and go out and dig dry wells instead – the manufacture and worship of idols.

Even the priests, the pastors of that day, were involved. They “prophesied by Baal.” They preached Baal’s word! “Thus says Baal....”. I leave it to you to think of contemporary examples of pulpits and preaching today that do the same.

Our nation, the people of this country, are dying of thirst. There is a famine in the land and it has as its cause this horrible exchange of the glory of God for worthless idols. All the other sins and evils we see increasing in the land proceed from this root – exchanging God for an idol and looking in other places for rescue:

Jeremiah 2:17-19 ESV Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD your God, when he led you in the way? (18) And now what do you gain by going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates? (19) Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

It is indeed *an evil and bitter thing to forsake the Lord and refuse to fear Him*. Everyone who does so will always be thirsty and if they persist in reject Christ they will thirst for all eternity –

Luke 16:24 ESV And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his



finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’

Now, so many people in this nation of ours have done this – *but YOU do not have to*. And Jeremiah is an example for us. He stood against an evil nation and the Lord strengthened him to do so.

Jeremiah 17:5-8 ESV Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. (6) He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

(7) “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. (8) He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”