

JUDGES

JEREMIAH 2:1-13

1. Is there something in your life that you used to do, that you wish you were still doing now? Maybe a habit, an exercise, a hobby, etc? (I was going to the gym regularly before COVID hit and I just haven't gotten back.)
2. Why do you think believers sometimes choose to stop reading their Bible, praying, attending worship services and substitute other things in their place? (Lazy, got wrapped up in worldly things. Etc.)

In this week's study we will see how God's people in Judah used to follow Him, but they were not doing it any longer. Jeremiah calls the people to repentance because they had forsaken God. Judgment was coming because of the people's unfaithfulness. Jeremiah offered a simple solution for them: Turn back to God. But they refused to listen to his godly advice. The false prophets were tickling the people's ears with messages of peace—everything is okay. We begin to see today why Jeremiah was called "The Weeping Prophet."

Last week we saw how God called Jeremiah to preach to His people. Now in Chapter 2 God gives him his first message on how His people have turned away from Him.

Israel had been in the Promise Land for more than 800 years. The people had been drifting away from God. The question was whether or not they would avoid God's judgment by listening to God's message through Jeremiah and turn back to Him. In the past, they had refused to listen to the messengers He had sent, but God was making one more effort by sending Jeremiah because of His love and compassion for His people.

REMEMBERED? Read Jeremiah 2:1-3

1. Whose message is this? (It is the Word of the Lord!)
 2. Why would this be an important statement? (Time after time throughout Jeremiah we find this statement or "This is the Lord's declaration." These are not Jeremiah's words!)
 3. What does God say through Jeremiah? ("I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothal, your following after Me in the wilderness...")
- The word "devotion" is the Hebrew word "chesed," love, lovingkindness, grace" of your youth. "Betrothal" is like our "engagement."
- Marriage is a covenant relationship. The indication here is that Israel's love for God is not what it used to be!
4. What does this passage indicate the relationship between God and His people was like at the beginning? (Like a bride for her groom. Head over heels in love.)
 5. What might be some signs that a husband and wife had lost their first love? (Not spending time together; not dating anymore; not holding hands like they used to; etc.)

No other nation had ever been chosen by God like this. Israel was the picture of loyalty, love, and devotion to the Lord. They belonged to the Lord just as their first fruits belonged to Him. Israel was the "first fruits" and any nation that attacked them was destroyed by the Lord.

6. Why are we prone to forget God's gracious acts on our behalf? (We begin to take Him for granted the way we do our spouse; we just go through the motions of worship and prayer and neglect God's Word, etc.)
7. What are the results of spiritual forgetfulness? (Broken fellowship with God; powerless living; drifting further away from God.)

The words "I remember" in verse 2 help us see that while the people had forgotten God, He had not forgotten them.

FORGOTTEN? Read Jeremiah 2:4-8

1. What had the people of Israel found wrong with God? (God had brought them through the wilderness “kicking and screaming” to the Promise Land and had provided for their every need. Yet at every opportunity they rebelled against Him. They thought their way was better.)
2. What or who do we tend to become like? (We become like what or whom we worship! Israel exchanged what was real for a cheap and worthless imitation. **Ps. 115:4**)

Israel worshiped “worthless idols and became worthless themselves.” Eccl. 1:2 uses the same wording to describe the futility of trying to find purpose apart from God.

Those who build their lives on empty things in the end become empty themselves! Like the gods they served, they had become delusional and empty.

3. What makes it so easy to fall into the trap of ingratitude? (We begin to think we are sufficient in and of ourselves. Pride takes over and we begin to sink.)

The people of Israel had a plentiful God in a worthless land, and the prosperity of the plentiful land enticed them to go after worthless gods!

4. What kinds of worthless idols do people substitute for God today? (Pleasure; money; self; etc.)

In 1940, Great Britain was on the verge of being overrun by Hitler and the 3rd Reich. France & Belgium had just fallen, it looked like they were next, but Winston Churchill took over as Prime Minister of Britain, and he rallied them with his speeches that have gone down in history: “blood, toil, tears, and sweat,” and “WE shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...” And they WON! Churchill led them to victory over Germany in May of 1945—and in July of 1945 they had another election—and in one of the most amazing election results in history, Churchill was voted OUT of office, after all he had done! It just seemed to be the height of ingratitude.

And that is what God says Israel did to HIM. After all He did for them: bringing them out of Egypt, bringing them through the wilderness with miraculous manna and water; bringing them into the Promised Land—they walked away from God and forgot Him.

But as bad as that is, do WE forget God too? —forget to pray; read His Word; forget to be thankful.

5. What do we learn from verse 8? (The priests failed their job; the experts in the law didn’t know God; rulers rebelled; and prophets prophesied by Baal and followed useless idols.)
6. Does the leader’s failure negate the individual’s responsibility? (No! Each person will stand before God and give an account for the choices they make.)
7. What are the qualities of a godly leader? (We will see the fruit of the Spirit evident in their life. Their goal will be to bring glory to God and be obedient to God’s Word.)
8. How can we make sure we don’t find ourselves following the wrong leaders?

Despite God’s faithfulness to His people, they had stopped seeking the true God and turned to idols!

EXCHANGED? Read Jeremiah 2:9-13

1. Have you ever made a bad deal trading? (Israel did! An acquaintance traded a boyhood friend some model ships for a box of Baseball cards. The box had many rookie cards of famous players, including Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, and Nolan Ryan. Maybe this was that young man’s worst trade ever.)

Jeremiah describes the worst trade ever: trading God for something else.

2. What two evils had God’s people committed against Him? (They had forsaken Him and given up the fountain of living water for cracked cisterns.)
3. Where did God tell His people to look to see if any other nation had traded their god for another? (East and west. A nation might add a god to their list, but they didn’t forsake their god.)
4. Does everyone know what a cistern is? (It is a bulb shaped dugout lined with plaster to hold water. They often became useless because of cracks that developed. Even if there were no cracks, the water became stagnant and undrinkable.)

5. How do things people turn to apart from God compare to a cracked cistern? (Eventually they become useless. It is a poor trade, turning away from the fountain of living waters, to broken cisterns that you wouldn't want to drink from anyway—but broken cisterns can't give you water!)
6. What are some examples of things that people turn to today, as substitutes for God? (Drugs; alcohol; food; false religions; religious works; sex/immorality; fame/approval; accumulation of possessions/collections/ human relationships; etc.)

You don't have to be a lost person to do this. Even as Christians we can do this on a certain level: turn to other things instead of turning to God for comfort.

Judgment always comes when people abandon God and put their trust in other things.

God called for the heavens to be horrified, shocked and utterly appalled at this. See Deut. 30:19; 31:28; and 32:1.

SUMMARY AND CHALLENGE!

1. How can we help protect each other from drifting away from God?
2. How can we hold one another accountable?
3. Why should Christians be concerned about their influence of fellow believers when it comes to devotion to God? (Someone is always looking at your life and sometimes the smallest thing could influence someone who's watching you.)
4. Is there any evidence in your life that you are chasing after empty idols more than you are seeking God?

God doesn't want to be number 1 on a list of 10 loves. He wants to be number 1 period!

5. What actions do you need to take to guard against drifting away from devotion to God?

Pray, thanking God for His faithfulness toward us. Pray that we will continue to seek Him with all our heart.