

## JEREMIAH 2 A FLOWING FOUNTAIN AND BROKEN CISTERNS

When Jeremiah began his public ministry – going from Anathoth to Jerusalem for that purpose (verse 2) – King Josiah, who was only 21 years of age, had been on the throne of Judah for 13 years. He was commencing those measures of reform which postponed the doom of his city and his nation, although they did not prevent it. It was in the midst of these works of reformation that the young prophet was called to make his influence felt. First, he protested against the prevalent sin around him. The one thought of the people was to preserve the outward acknowledgment of Jehovah by the continued observance of the Temple services and ceremonies. They vainly imagined that if these things were rigorously observed, then there was no sufficient cause for charging them with the sin of apostasy. It was Jeremiah's mission to show that mere outward observance of rituals and ceremonies is worse than useless, and that it is indeed compatible with a real forsaking of God. This accounts for the plain denunciations of sin that came burning-hot from the lips of the young prophet. Every metaphor that human art can suggest is employed to bring home to the people their infidelity to their great Lover and Redeemer (chapter 3:20).

The prophet also protested against the Jews' desire, at that time, to form an alliance between their nation and Egypt. Why should the Lord's people bind themselves to an alliance with any heathen entity? Is not God their King? Will He not help them in times of distress? Surely their best policy is to stand alone – unimpeded by heathen alliances, resting only upon the mighty power of Jehovah, serving His purposes, and standing true to His law and devoted to His will!

In verse 13, our imaginations are taken to a scene among the mountains. In that green glade, a fountain rises icy cold from the depths, and pours its silver stream downward through the valley. You can hear the music of its ripple, and trace its course by the vegetation that follows it. It is always flowing in abundance for young and old in the villages and hamlets; and when it has grown fuller and broader, it also serves the inhabitants of large towns along its course. However, in this secluded spot, its banks are unvisited! No cup nor bucket descends into its crystal depths.

But far away from that verdant valley, we hear the clink of the chisel; and presently, we discover people of every age and rank engaged in making water-cisterns to supply their homes. The sweaty bead-drops stand thick upon their brows as they pursue their arduous toil – wrestling with the stubborn granite – from early dawn until far into the night. They will not avail themselves of the

### Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord expostulates with His people – verses 1-8
- ❖ He speaks of their unrivaled rebellion against Himself as their God – verses 9-13
- ❖ He tells them that their sins are the cause of their bitter sufferings – verses 14-19
- ❖ He speaks of their sins and their false confidences – verses 20-37



materials of former times, nor will they utilize the ancient cisterns that were used by their ancestors. Each man has his own new scheme, and his own novel design. After years of work, he may finally achieve his purpose and complete the cistern upon which he has spent his lifetime; and then he hopes and waits for the rainshowers to fill it. Presently the rain descends, and he is filled with pride and pleasure to think of the store of water which he has been able to secure. But alas! It does not stay within the cistern. As soon as it enters, it passes out; for there is a fatal crack. Despite his great care and pains that he has expended, his cistern can hold no water.



What an infinite mistake to miss the fountain, which is so freely flowing to quench men's thirst; and to hew out a broken cistern, in which there is nothing but disappointment and despair! Yet this was the precise situation of Israel. They had done as no other nation in history had ever done! The heathen could at least be commended for their consistency in their worship of their false gods. But the people of Jehovah had forsaken Him – just as a maiden might lay aside her jewels, or a bride her attire. And in resorting to false religions and heathen alliances, they were hewing out for themselves broken cisterns which would fail them in their hour of direst need.

Very pathetically, Jeremiah reminds the people of their former love and devotion to the Lord in their past history (verses 2-7). The whole chapter is full of questions as God presses His charges of their desertion of Him. There is nothing sadder to see than the ebb of love in a relationship, as the slowly receding waters drop down from the high-water mark which they had reached with their dancing wavelets. In human experience, this is something like the pain felt by the Eternal One as He saw Israel, for whom He had done so much, turning away from Him to strangers. Their apostasy was as grievous to Him as if a wife was to depart from her husband who loved her, and join herself to another man instead (chapter 3:1).

How does all this apply to us? Every human being has a soul-thirst that is craving satisfaction; and each is within easy reach of God, Whose nature is like water from the rock for those who are athirst. But sadly, many are attempting the impossible task of satisfying the thirst for the infinite and Divine with mortal men and worldly things. And in the expressive words of Jeremiah, they are “broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” In the time of trouble, they will not be able to save those who have constructed them and trusted in them. But at your feet, O weary cistern-hewer, the fountain of God's love is flowing through the channel of Jesus Christ! Stoop to drink from that Fountain! Forsake the idolatries which have alienated you from your Best Friend; and open your heart, so that He may fill you with the living water that He alone can give!

*Lord Jesus, thank You for being the Fountainhead of living water, to Whom we are freely invited by the Holy Spirit to come and quench our thirsty souls! Amen.*