

Trading God For Nothing: Jeremiah 2:1-13 Explained

Jeremiah 2:1-13

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. 3 Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD. 4 Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: 5 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? 6 Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? 7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. 8 The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. 9 Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. 10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. 11 Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. 12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. 13 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.

INTRODUCTION

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever made a trade you regretted? Maybe you traded in a good vehicle and later wished you hadn't. Maybe you sold something valuable only to realize later what it was worth. Children do it all the time. One child has a brand-new bicycle. Another has a broken toy. Somehow they trade. And afterward one of them says, "What was I thinking?"

Many times, in our life, trades are made that truly don't make any sense at all. For example, people will trade this time they could have had in church learning the most important things for the absolute dumbest of things.

Imagine you've been hiking through the desert for days. The sun is beating down. Your lips are cracked. You're desperately thirsty. Then, just ahead, you hear the sound of running water. You rush over and find a beautiful spring. Crystal-clear water is flowing constantly. It's cool. It's fresh. It's everything you need.

But instead of drinking from the spring, you walk a few yards away to an old cracked cistern. The water inside is stale. Dirt has fallen into it. Snakes are slithering around it. Most of the water has leaked out through the cracks. You kneel down and try to drink from that instead.

You'd think, "**Why would anyone do that?**" That's exactly the question God is asking Israel in Jeremiah 2 right there. The question is not about money. Not about land. Not about possessions. But about Him.

Wouldn't you try to stop the man that was trying to drink from the old cistern with old water and get him to drink from the perfect and fresh spring water that is flowing with life? Wouldn't you ask that man, **"Why are you trying to drink from that old cistern when there's fresh spring water right there?"**

That's Jeremiah 2. God isn't angry first. He's heartbroken. He keeps asking, **"Why?"** We make decisions and choices just like this every day. Why?

I. GOD REMEMBERED WHEN THEY LOVED HIM

Jeremiah 2:1-3

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. 3 Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

Notice how God begins. He doesn't begin with judgment. He begins with memories. "I remember thee." Think about that. God remembers. He remembers their kindness. He remembers their love. He remembers when Israel followed Him through the wilderness.

Imagine an elderly husband sitting in his living room looking through an old photo album. He smiles. "I remember when we first met. I remember our wedding day. I remember when we couldn't wait to be together." That's the picture here. God is remembering Israel's first love.

Notice something. They followed Him through the wilderness. There weren't beautiful cities. There weren't comfortable homes. Yet they trusted Him. Why? Because they loved Him. Sometimes people begin the Christian life with tremendous excitement. They can't wait to read their Bible. They can't wait to come to church. They can't wait to tell others about Jesus.

Then something changes. The excitement fades. The love grows cold. God remembers when it wasn't like that. Let me ask you. Do you remember when you first got saved? Do you remember the excitement? Do you still have it? **Why would anyone trade God for less?**

II. GOD ASKS ONE OF THE SADDEST QUESTIONS

Jeremiah 2:4-8

Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: 5 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? 6 Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? 7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination. 8 The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Notice God's question. **"What iniquity have your fathers found in me?"** Think about that. God asks, "What did I do wrong?" Did I fail you? Did I lie to you? Did I break My promises? Did I stop loving you? Imagine a faithful husband whose wife suddenly leaves him. He sits there asking, "What did I do? Where did I fail?" That's God's heart.

Then God reminds them of everything He had done. "I brought you out of Egypt. I led you through the wilderness. I protected you. I brought you into a plentiful country." Imagine rescuing someone from a burning house. Feeding them. Giving them a home. Providing everything they need. Then one day they look at you and say, "I don't want you anymore." Wouldn't that break your heart?

Notice verse 8. Even the priests had stopped seeking God. The pastors had transgressed. The prophets preached Baal. Leadership had drifted. And the people followed. Nobody ruins their relationship with God overnight. They drift there one compromise at a time.

III. THEY TRADED GOD FOR NOTHING

Jeremiah 2:9-11

Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. 10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. 11 Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

Now we reach the heart of the chapter. God says, Go look at other nations. Has any nation abandoned its gods? Even though those gods aren't real, they stay loyal to them.

Then God says something shocking. "My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." Think about that. They traded God for idols. They traded truth for lies. They traded life for emptiness.

Imagine someone walking into a bank with a solid gold bar. The teller says, "I'll trade you this handful of gravel for that solid gold bar." And he says, "Deal." You'd think he had lost his mind. That's exactly what Israel did. Only they traded something infinitely more valuable. They traded God Himself. **Why would anyone trade God for less?**

But people do that constantly. Think about what you trade God out for every day. Maybe you give all your time to something that is completely worthless like Tik Tok, video games, phones.

IV. THE TWO EVILS

Jeremiah 2:12-13

Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. 13 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.

This is one of the greatest pictures in all of Jeremiah. God says, "My people have committed two evils." Notice. Not one. Two. The first. "They have forsaken me." The fountain of living waters. Imagine hiking through a desert. The sun is beating down. Your lips are dry. You're desperate for water.

Then suddenly you find a beautiful spring. Fresh water. Cold water. Living water. But instead of drinking, you walk away. You dig a hole in the dirt. You pour water into it. The ground cracks. The water leaks away. Now you're kneeling in the mud trying to drink what's left. Who would do that? Nobody.

Yet that's exactly what Israel did. God says, "I am the fountain. I never run dry. I never become polluted. I never fail." Yet they walked away. Then they dug broken cisterns. A cistern was simply a man-made pit dug into the ground to collect rainwater. The problem? These cisterns were cracked. They couldn't even hold water.

Think about that. Not only did they leave the fountain, they chose something that couldn't satisfy them anyway. Isn't that exactly what sin promises? Money. Pleasure. Popularity. Success. Alcohol. Drugs. Immorality. The world says, "This will satisfy you." People chase it. Drink from it. Live for it. Then discover... it's empty.

Because only God satisfies the thirsty soul. **Why would anyone trade God for less?** Only God will bring true happiness and true joy but He is traded for other things day after day. We have done this, and we still do this. It needs to stop.

CONCLUSION

Let me ask you one final question. What are you drinking from? Are you drinking from the fountain... or from broken cisterns? What are you trusting to satisfy your life? Money? Career? Entertainment? Women? Men? Friends? Music? Relationships? Success?

None of those things were ever designed to replace God. The tragedy of Jeremiah 2 isn't that Israel stopped drinking. It's that they stopped drinking from the only source that could satisfy them. Remember the man we talked about at the beginning? Standing beside a crystal-clear spring... walking away... to drink muddy water from a cracked hole in the ground.

You'd say, "That's crazy." God says, That's exactly what My people did. Don't make the same trade. Don't trade the Fountain of Living Waters... for broken cisterns that can never satisfy. **Why would anyone trade God for less?**

Let's pray.