

Journey through Jeremiah Part 3 – The Sins of Israel

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, January 7, 2016

† Jeremiah 2:1-37

1 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Now we get to Jeremiah's first actual preaching. All of Chapter 1 covered his call and commission. From here on out it is hands on for Jeremiah. He has been thrown feet first into the life of being a prophet. He gets instruction from the LORD.

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.

The first thing the LORD is going to do is remind the people of how they USED to be. He is comparing their relationship with him to a young couple in love. Israel being the bride that is in love with her groom. He said that they "[wentest after me in the wilderness.](#)" He is of course speaking of the time that he led them out of slavery of Egypt and how they loved him and walked after him in the wilderness.

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.

Now he is reminding them that they are his **firstfruits**. The "**firstfruits**" was the portion of the harvest that belonged to God. It was consecrated and holy. There were laws concerning the firstfruit offering such as we see in: **Exodus 23:19a**: The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God...

According to the Jewish Virtual Library: "The firstborn of man and beast belonged to the God of Israel and were to be devoted to Him, the first fruits, including the first grains to ripen each season, were to be brought as an offering to God. Every Israelite who possessed the means of agricultural productivity was under this obligation."¹

The firstfruits were the priest's portion. This is what they lived on. No one else was allowed to eat or take of this. The LORD is comparing Israel to the firstfruits and says "[all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them.](#)"

If you have been keeping up with the news then you know what our lame-duck president pulled last week turning his back on Israel and siding with the UN to condemn Israeli settlements on their own land, by not vetoing the vote. He showed his true colors as a sympathizer for Islamic terrorist and hatred toward our friends and allies, Israel. -- My friend, we are subject to come under God's judgement for our treatment of Israel. Just as it says in our text in Jeremiah "[all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them.](#)"

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?

The LORD asks a rhetorical question here really: "[What iniquity have your fathers found in me](#)"[?] Of course there is no iniquity to be found in the LORD. He is perfect, holy, and sinless. So why would the Children of Israel forsake the LORD? He says that they: "[are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain.](#)" Sounds a whole lot like the people here in the United States huh?

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?

All that God had done for them had been forgotten. The slavery, the cruelty of Pharaoh and their Egyptian task masters all forgotten. God's leading of them for 40-years through the wilderness keeping them from harm, feeding them and providing all their needs – all forgotten.

Have you ever known anyone that you have helped? Went out of your way, spent time, money, and effort to help them and you genuinely cared for them and their well-being, but after they got their situation, problem, or life worked out they walked away and out of your life like they had never known you? That is what the Children of Israel have done to the LORD.

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.

Not only did they walk away from the LORD but they thumbed their noses at his goodness, grace, and mercy. They setup false idols in the land and bowed down to false gods and idols. What a slap in the face!

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.

The priests and they that handle the law: these were the holy men of God that had been separated to perform the duties of God in the Holy Temple and to uphold the Law of God to see that it was being kept and delving out punishment for anyone breaking God's laws. All they were doing now was going through motions. If they had been doing their job this idolatry would have never happened.

The pastors: These were men that God had appointed to be overseers of the people, their duties were to be shepherds. They were to feed the people with knowledge and understanding of God. Just as it says in **Jeremiah 3:15**: [And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.](#)

The prophets: God's prophets had turned from the true God and were now acting as prophets of Baal. Things couldn't be much worse than they were.

9 Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

The word "**plead**" that is used here is not used the way that we think in our modern English. The Hebrew language it means to "toss, grapple, or wrangle." Those are wrestling words. He is going to wrestle with them and their children's children.

¹ Jewish Virtual Library, Firstfruits:

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0007_0_06495.html

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.

The LORD says from [Chittim](#) which is all the lands to the west - to [Kedar](#) which is all the lands to the east, there's not another people or nation that has done such a thing as the Children of Israel have done to Him.

God says that His people have changed from Him, which is a real God, to other gods which are not gods and have done absolutely nothing for them yet they are worshipping them.

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

The foolishness of God's people is so bad that he calls for the heavens to dry up in horror over such an atrocity.

You've heard of phrases such as: "If he saw that he would roll over in his grave." That is much the same expression being used here. If heaven were to look down and see the sins of this people and how they have turned from the true God to bowing down to false gods it would become desolate.

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.

Then he lists two evils:

1. They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters. – Of course the LORD is the source for living water.
2. They have hewed out broken cisterns that can hold no water. – A cistern is a temporary holding pot. Used to collect rain water.

Jesus said in [John 7:38](#) He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

The LORD is a source of life and spiritual blessings to them but they have forsaken him and instead of partaking of [the fountain of living waters](#) they instead prefer the temporary water in a [cistern](#). Not only is a cistern a temporary bucket but the ones that they are using or broken. They are full of holes and cannot hold any water. Of course this is referring to the lack of spiritual water or help that would come from the false gods that they had turned to.

14 Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?

Another rhetorical question: "Is Israel a servant? Is he a homeborn slave?" The answer of course is NO. They used to be slaves back in Egypt but God had delivered them from that. They are now firstborn sons of God, not slaves. But because of their idolatry and their worship of strange gods in strange lands they are now "spoiled." That word **spoiled** doesn't mean the same as how we normally use it in our modern English. We think of a child that is given everything they desire as being spoiled but here the word spoiled here means "**to be plundered or put to ruin.**" The enemy has come in and spoiled their land and their inheritance because of their idolatry.

15 The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

When Israel stepped outside of God's bounds and committed acts that were abominable to Him they invited destruction on themselves. They were now facing the lions that would come in and devastate. The lions would be referring to their enemies.

16 Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

Noph and Tahapanes were two cities of Egypt, otherwise called Memphis and Daphni. We know that the good King Josiah was defeated by the Egyptians, and slain in battle. We read that in [2 Kings 23:29-30](#): In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him. [30](#) And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

This is what is being referred to by the "broken crown of thy head."

17 Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way? 18 And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

Instead of turning to the LORD for what they needed, they made alliances with Egypt and Assyria, both of those nations were enemies of God's people. But that's what happens when you forsake the LORD and turn to the world.

19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts. 20 For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

The LORD says because of their evilness, backsliding, and forsaking of him, He has broken their yoke from him. They are going up into the high places and worshipping false gods but pretending they are worshipping Him. He says they are "playing the harlot." There is often a comparison of God and His people as a marriage relationship. Here Israel is compared to an adulteress wife. We see this all through the Old Testament when God is referring to His people forsaking him. We see it in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea.

21 Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

With the LORD they were well nourished and growing and what he calls a "noble vine." A noble vine brings forth good fruit such as grapes. But chasing after idols and false gods they have turned into a degenerate strange vine with corruption.

22 For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.

Nitre was a substance that they made to clean clothes with. It was similar to lye. It was an acid. He said even if they wash with nitre and soap they can't clean the iniquity from themselves.

23 How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

The people try to claim they are not polluted or idol worshipers but the LORD says that they have went after Baalim. Which is another name for Baal. He said they see their way in the valley. He is referring to the Valley of Hinnom where the pagans offered their children up as sacrifices to Moloch. The Children of Israel were doing the same thing and pretending they weren't.

When King Josiah began cleaning things up one of the things that he did was tear down the place of sacrifice to Molech. We read that in **2 Kings 23:10**: And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

In the sacrifice to Molech they would beat loud drums to try and drown out the screams of the children that they were sacrificing.

Here in the United States we are still worshiping Molech and sacrificing our children but now it is legal and is called abortion. Let me tell you something, it's not legal in God's eyes. You better believe we are going to pay for murdering babies in this country.

In the last part of verse 23 he says: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways; A dromedary is a female camel. It is referring to a female camel in heat running about looking for a mate. Then he continues with the same thought in the next verse:

24 A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

He describes a wild ass running through the wilderness sniffing out a mate for pleasure. But the Children of Israel are even worse, they are constantly running about seeking for idolatry with a passion and are never satisfied.

25 Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

He tells them to stop running about prostituting themselves never being satisfied, going after every strange god and idol.

26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,

He tells them just like when thief is caught he is ashamed of what he has done, and when God calls Israel out for their idolatry they too will be ashamed; their kings, princes, priests, and prophets all alike.

27 Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

He tells them that when they get into trouble they will cry out to their false idols and gods but they will not get any help or answers from them. When they realize they

are not going to get any help they will then realize that the God of Heaven is who they should have been crying out to and they will cry out to Him.

28 But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

He had already given them so many chances yet they refused to be true to Him. Now he rebukes them by telling them to call out to their strange gods for help. If they are so powerful and they love them so much ask them for help.

29 Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.

But He's not going to help them. They have transgressed against him. They had their chances but now it was too late. They pushed God too far.

30 In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

The LORD had been punishing them for their disobedience. He had been chastening them and it was doing no good. They themselves had even killed their own prophets.

31 O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee? 32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

He asks them if he has been hid from them in the darkness? No, he has been right there with them to help them and to provide for them but they turned away from Him. They forgot what all He had done for them.

33 Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways. 34 Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

Judah had transgressed so bad that they were destroying innocent people. We see that in **2 Kings 21:16**: Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD. This would be the slaughter of Judah's own prophets and anyone who dared to speak out against the idolatry and sins of the nation.

Much the same as what happens in the USA these days. If you speak out against sin then YOU are the one that is labeled dangerous and intolerant and not worthy to live.

35 Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned. 36 Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. 37 Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

They will continue to pretend to be innocent thinking that God will have mercy on them and not punish them but they are mistaken. He will most certainly move against them and punish them for their sinfulness.