

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Jeremiah: Prophet Of Judgment Followed By Blessing

Part IV: God's Indictment Of Judah For Exchanging Him For Vain Crutches (Jeremiah 2:9-19)

I. Introduction

- A. Though we Christians often view the sin of idolatry as occurring with people in Old Testament times, 1 John 5:21 KJV directs us Christians to "keep yourselves from idols," and to explain, Dr. Charles C. Ryrie comments that "(a)n idol is anything that substitutes for God," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 1 John 5:21.
- B. God's indictment of Judah in Jeremiah 2:9-19 regarding Judah's sin of idolatry actually highlights the way the nation **substituted** false crutches, false "idols" for the true God, so it applies very much to us (as follows):

II. God's Indictment Of Judah For Exchanging Him For Vain Crutches, Jeremiah 2:9-19.

- A. God indicted Judah for exchanging him for vain idols, Jeremiah 2:9-12:
 1. After critiquing the forefathers in Jeremiah 2:5-8 for turning to idols, God again brought charges against the forefathers and added charges against their grandchildren, Jeremiah's generation, Jeremiah 2:9 NIV.
 2. The Lord then called Judah's people to cross over to the seacoasts of Kittim (Cyprus) in the west or to Kedar in the east that was inhabited by north Arabian desert tribes and observe closely to see if there had been anything there like what had happened in Judah, Jer. 2:9-10 NIV; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1132.
 3. That astounding event had been Judah's change of deity, what even pagan nations would not do, for the pagans were at least faithful to their false gods unlike what Judah had been to its true God, Jeremiah 2:11.
 4. God called the heavens as a witness to be appalled at Judah's exchange of deities, to shudder with great horror at a wickedness that had occurred only in Judah and not even in pagan lands, Jeremiah 2:12.
- B. This heinous sin in Judah was comprised of two parts of evil as illustrated by the Lord in Jeremiah 2:13:
 1. On the one hand, Judah's people had forsaken the Lord, forsaking the Spring of "living" water, figurative for running water, and in His place had made their own replacement crutches, likened to digging their own cisterns into rock caverns and plastering them to hold stale, brackish rainwater that would collect in them, cisterns that turned out to be broken, unable to hold even collected, stale rainwater, Jeremiah 2:13b; *Ibid.*
 2. The contrast is enormous: God was a bubbling Spring of constantly renewing fresh, "living" or running water, what Judah had rejected in favor of digging out and plastering their own cisterns to collect and hold stale rain water, only then to see the cisterns turn out to be broken, unable hold even the stale rainwater!
- C. God then explained the illustration He had just used in terms of Judah's history, Jeremiah 2:14-18:
 1. First, in rejecting the Lord, Judah had brought a loss of blessing on herself in accord with the judgments predicted in the Mosaic Covenant (Deuteronomy 28): though Judah had not been a servant or slave by birth, she had become a plunder for Gentiles that had roared against her as an attacking lion and destroyed her land, burning her towns and leaving them deserted, Jer. 2:14-15. "The reference to Memphis (cf. Ezek. 30:13, 16) and Tahpanhes (cf. Ezek. 30:18), cities of Egypt," refer either to "Pharaoh Shishak's invasion of Judah in 925 B. C. (1 Kings 14:25-26) or to Pharaoh Neco's killing Josiah in 609 (2 Kings 23:29-30). In both instances Egypt triumphed over Judah and shaved the crown of Judah's head" by thus defeating and humbling her, *Ibid.*; Jer. 2:16. God added that Judah brought this calamity on herself by forsaking the Lord when He had led her in the way out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, Jeremiah 2:17.
 2. Second, after rejecting the Lord, the source of her "living" or running water, she had dug out her own cisterns to collect water, one of those cisterns being meant to collect the water of Egypt's Shihor, an arm extremity of the Nile River (Jer. 2:18a; Z. P. E. B., v. Five, p. 401) and the other cistern being meant to collect the water of Assyria's Euphrates River (Jer. 2:18b). Thus, Judah had turned from trusting the All-Sufficient God for blessing to make treaties with frail and eventually futile Egypt to her south and frail and eventually futile Assyria to her north in vain hope of securing protection and blessing, a form of idolatry.
- D. Accordingly, God warned Judah that her wickedness would punish her and her backsliding from Him would rebuke her, leading to calamity and bitterness in forsaking the Lord and not revering Him, Jeremiah 2:19.

Lesson: For rejecting God, her Source of true, rich blessing for the stale "blessings" of Egypt and Assyria, Judah committed a terrible sin unlike even pagan nations by exchanging her Lord, the True God at that, for inferior crutches that would prove to be broken and hence useless anyway. She thus left herself open for bitter calamity.

Application: May we hold to God as our sole Source of blessing, not replacing Him in sad futility with any crutch.