

# Two Evils • Jeremiah 2:13 / 2 Kings 22

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *From Rejoicing To Weeping*

1. This morning marks a rather dramatic transition in subject matter as we move from the inspirational letter of Paul to the Philippians, to the Prophecy of Jeremiah, who's called the "weeping prophet"
2. It's a marked change from the *triumphant rejoicing* of Paul to the *tearful lament* of Jeremiah

### B. *Jeremiah*

1. Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet to the nation of Judah in the last years of it's existence
2. He was born and called during the reign of Judah's last good king, Josiah.
3. His message was a hard one, a mournful one: In fact, the book of *Lamentations* is an appendix to the Book of Jeremiah
4. By the time Jeremiah comes on the scene, the destiny of the nation is cast in stone – her judgment is due
5. Jeremiah's message was not so much one of *warning* as it was of a faithful voice *reminding* the people of God's righteousness in the midst of their judgment.
6. Look at verse 9 . . .

## II. TEXT

### A. *V. 9-13*

- <sup>9</sup> "Therefore I will yet bring charges against you," says the LORD, and against your children's children I will bring charges.
- <sup>10</sup> For pass beyond the coasts of Cyprus and see, send to Kedar and consider diligently, and see if there has been such a *thing*.
- <sup>11</sup> Has a nation changed *its* gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory for *what* does not profit.
- <sup>12</sup> Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; Be very desolate," says the LORD.
- <sup>13</sup> "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, *and* hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.
1. Jeremiah rehearses Judah's sins
    - a. like a lawyer in a court
    - b. he brings forth a list of charges against the nation
  2. And here he marks one charge that was outrageous and unique – The Jews had forsaken their God

3. Jeremiah is amazed; never before has such a thing been known!
  - a. nations just don't give up their deities
  - b. they cling to them with fierce loyalty
  - c. he says, "Look around – search far and wide – read the history of the nations. When has a nation neglected its god?"
  - d. but the gods of all the nations are nothing more than idols, they're fakes, cheats
  - e. and *still*, their people cling to them
4. Judah on the other hand, who belongs to the true God, has turned their back on Him!
  - a. He has done nothing but bless them
  - b. He has proven Himself time and again,
  - c. even in miraculous ways that could not be denied
  - d. but the people had turned their backs on him and gone after the worthless idols of the other nations.
5. Verse 13 sums it up . . .

**13 "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.**

- a. the first charge is that they have forsaken God
- b. the second charge is that they had set up other gods in his place
6. He was the source of life – the fountain of living water
  - a. all they needed could be found in Him
  - b. He was their source and supply
  - c. genuine, lasting satisfaction is in Him
  - d. like a glass of ice cold water when you are parched and thirsty – He is the One!
7. But they had rejected Him, and set up substitutes in His place
8. When I read this, I see two images from our tour in Israel
  - a. up in the north, in the region of Dan, which is the headwaters of the Jordan River, there's a spot where the water literally gushes out of the ground
  - b. it's no little mountain spring that trickles out at a few drops a second
  - c. it's a *torrent* of water that bursts out of the ground
  - d. it's icy cold because it comes from the melting snows on the top of Mount Hermon several miles away.
    - 1) the water filters down through the bedrock
    - 2) and as it does, it gets saturated with minerals
    - 3) then it gushes out of the ground; a healthy, pure, ice cold fountain!
  - e. the other image I see is of a large, dank, underground vault below the streets of Jerusalem
    - 1) water is scarce in that region
    - 2) and before the advent of modern plumbing, people drew water from one of the couple of springs that fed the city, or from large underground pits called *cisterns*
    - 3) over the centuries, people dug these cisterns to collect and store rain water

- a) the rain would land on the houses and the streets and then collect and run into a gutter, and these would empty into the cisterns
- b) you can imagine what the water in these cisterns was like
- c) muddy, slimy, fetid
- 4) despite this, the people would go and draw water from the cistern and use it for cooking and washing
- f. cisterns were *man-made* holes in the ground
- g. and in order to make sure they held water, they would plaster the insides
- h. but over time, the ground would shift and cracks would form in the walls and floor of the cistern
- i. the water would leak out and all that would be left would be the slimy residue of dirty water that had set for too long
- 9. That's the picture Jeremiah paints here
  - a. God was a Fountain of Life-Giving Water, but they had rejected Him
  - b. and in His place they had carved out for themselves replacement gods that were useless and slimy

## **B. Two Evils**

1. God said, "My people have committed TWO EVILS . . . "
2. People always commit two evils when they reject the true and living God
3. You see, man is *insatiably religious* – he HAS to worship something!
4. So when he commits the evil of rejecting the True God, he will always commit another evil and set up an idol – a man-made substitute, who's no replacement at all.
5. In ancient Israel and Judah, the substitutes had names like Baal, Asherah, Molech, Marduk, Isis, Osiris, & Dagon
6. Our age has its own *man-made replacements* for God
  - a. we may think ourselves too sophisticated to bow down before an image like the idols of old
  - b. but make no mistake, there are as many idols being worshiped today as there has been in the past
  - c. they just go by different names: Power, lust, greed, pleasure, fame
7. But what I want to ask you to take careful note of this morning is to whom the Lord is speaking in these verses – Who is he referring to? Who has committed these two evils?
8. Look at the first words of v. 13 = "For My People, have committed two evils."
9. We expect the lost to worship idols – they're lost!
10. But what should we expect from the people of God? They ought to worship and serve God and have no commerce with idols.
11. I want to ask you to hold on to that thought while I tell you a story from another passage of scripture – and then I'll tie the two together . . .

## **C. The Lost Book**

1. In 2 Kings 22, we read an interesting story that took place during the reign of Josiah, Judah's last good king
2. This story takes place right at the beginning of the call of Jeremiah to be a

prophet

3. Prior to Josiah, there had been several wicked kings who had ruled in Judah and the temple of God had fallen into disuse and disrepair
4. Josiah was a young man who loved God with all his heart and determined to repair the House of God.
5. One day, while clearing out the debris, the workers discovered a scroll and brought it to the foreman, who took it to one of the priests
6. When the priest unrolled it, he realized it was the Law of Moses!
7. Now, we might say “So what? What’s the big deal, they found a bible?!?”
8. Not quite right – They found THE BIBLE – the only bible there was!
9. Up to this point it had been *lost*.
10. Do you see the *irony*?
  - a. where did they find it? In the temple!
  - b. where had it been lost? In the House of God!
  - c. if we were to put this in modern terms, the Bible got lost in church!
11. They took it to Josiah and when he read it, he tore his royal garments in grief
12. He realized in an instant that the nation, though maintaining an outward form and reputation as the people of God, had in fact departed from the Lord
13. Everything God had warned them not to do, they had done!
14. And according to God’s promise, if they did so, they would be judged with terrible judgments!

### **C. Putting It Together**

1. Judah was judged because although they were the people of God, they had neglected His Word
2. They maintained something of the form and reputation of belonging to God, but they had turned to their own devices in the issues of daily life
3. They no longer listened to God, they no longer had time or care for His Word
4. They preferred the wisdom of the experts; they desired the soothing counsel of those who were willing to tickle their itching ears with grand promises of peace and prosperity

### **D. Today**

1. I regret to say that it seems things today are a *replay* of the days of Josiah and Jeremiah
2. The modern Church has become filled with the *wisdom of man* and the *debris of the world*
3. Why is it, that with more people than ever claiming to be born-again, bible-believing, evangelical Christians, the culture around us is sliding into a gutter of moral filth and oblivion?
4. And why is it that statistically, Christians often seem morally indistinguishable from the rest of the culture?
5. I’ll tell you why - We’ve forsaken God, the fountain of living water and instead have hewn out for ourselves cisterns to hold the polluted opinions of man
6. Instead of simply teaching and preaching the Word of God and depending on the Holy Spirit to apply it to the lives of His people, we’ve devised our own

- means of “doing church”
- a. we develop *marketing strategies*
  - b. we do a *demographic analysis* of our *target audience* and then tailor our program to meet their *felt needs*
  - c. we turn the *sanctuary* into a *theater*
  - d. and instead of making *saints*, we *cultivate consumers*
  - e. we’ve redefined success from faithfulness to God and His message to “church growth” and “market share”
  - f. we’ve *promoted personalities* and made *celebrities* out of what should be *servants*
  - g. and replaced the oft time *offensive* Gospel of Christ with the soothing message of a watered down spirituality
7. We’ve replaced the message of the Prophets with the theories of psychologists
  8. And instead of preparing people for heaven, we’re just enabling them to cope with their guilt while they make their way slowly toward hell
  9. I realize this sound bleak!
  10. But I believe it with every ounce of my soul
  11. And I say all this in these *stark terms* because it’s my hope that each and every one of us will be challenged this morning to take a good hard look *within*
  12. Are YOU drinking from the Fountain of Living Water or are you drinking from the broken cisterns of this world’s wisdom
  13. Don’t be too quick to answer that – think about it!
  14. It’s not that easy a question to answer.
  15. You see, you brought your Bible to church this morning, I hope
    - a. if you didn’t, that might be rather telling right there
    - b. let’s say you *did* bring your Bible – GREAT!
    - c. but do you take it with you into the living room of your home, into the bedroom, into the kitchen and the dining room?
    - d. how about the TV room?
    - e. do you take the Word of God with you to work – when you go to the store?
    - f. I don’t mean literally carrying it around in your hand – I mean in your heart and mind!
    - g. DO YOU DO IT?

### **E. The Crux Of The Problem**

1. Here’s the crux of the issue – there are many, *many* Christians today whose spirit belongs to Jesus but whose mind belongs to the world!
2. And they are blissfully unaware of the fact that they hold thoughts and beliefs that are completely *contradictory*
3. A college student was attending a lecture by a well known Christian speaker
  - a. this student was the president of his on-campus Christian group, but was living with his girlfriend
  - b. during the speech, the speaker made mention of the fact that having sex outside of marriage was a sin; the student took offense and engaged the speaker in conversation afterward
  - c. he argued and said that it was no sin to have sex with someone you loved

- d. the speaker said that the Apostle Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians that sex outside of marriage is sin
  - e. the student said, "I disagree with you."
  - f. the speaker said, "No, you disagree with Paul."
  - g. the student then said, "Okay, fine- I disagree with Paul."
  - h. he then went on to explain that as he saw it, the Bible was written long ago for a different age and that today the Holy Spirit can reveal new truth – truth that might even *differ with* or *contradict* what the Bible teaches.
4. Do you see what happened here? This young man, while claiming to be an evangelical Christian, had absorbed the *mental framework* of a secular culture
  5. And he was *reinterpreting* scripture in the context of that framework
  6. How many Christians today are doing exactly the same thing?
    - a. whether it's their sex life
    - b. their marriage
    - c. the way they raise their children
    - d. or pay their taxes
    - e. there is simply no connection between what they say they believe and what they in fact do
  7. They say they believe in God and trust Jesus for eternal life -
  8. But when it comes down to it, they live their lives by the *world's values, priorities, and wisdom*
  9. Let me use another example
    - a. God's Word is filled with counsel on *family life*
    - b. from marriage to parenting, there's an abundance of direction from the God who created us
    - c. yet many Christians today have rejected this counsel in favor of the so-called experts
      - 1) their rejection isn't so much a conscious decision to turn their backs on God as it is a neglect of His Word
      - 2) they spend far more time and give far more credence to the books and tapes than to God's Word
    - d. how did Dr. Spock become an expert on child-raising? What qualifies him to speak authoritatively on the subject?
    - e. there's a whole galaxy of marriage enrichment gurus out there now, hawking their different programs for increasing marital intimacy
    - f. but the vast majority of it is based on a *secular psychology* that rejects God and is actively anti-bible
    - g. yet their books and videos are in the Christian bookstores and thousands upon thousands of Christian couples are attending their seminars
  10. Let me try to make this a bit more personal:
    - a. regarding your money: do you earn, save, invest, spend, and give it as the Word of God counsels?
    - b. husband, do you treat your wife like Christ treats the Church?
    - c. wife, do you submit to your husband as to the Lord?
    - d. mom and dad, do you discipline your children *as scripture tells you to* or do you think you know better?
    - e. single men – do you look at single women as *sisters in Christ*, or do you

- size them up for availability?
  - f. single ladies – do you treat the single guys *equally* as *brothers*, or do you show preference based on desirability?
  - g. shall I go on?
11. Paul is quite clear in Romans 12:2

**“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”**

- a. this is written to believers – to people who are born again!
- b. Paul urges them to engage in the life-long process of transformation
- c. they must bring every thought captive to Christ
- d. their minds, so long given over to the ways of the world, must be changed
- e. they must learn to think thoughts that are in harmony with truth, not the fallen and error-filled ways of this world

## **F. *Worldview***

1. Now - I realize this is a little deep, but please stay with me because it's vital . . .
2. It all boils down to a question of “*worldviews*”
  - a. a worldview is how a person interprets reality: What's real?
  - b. everybody *has* a worldview – it's just a matter of finding out what yours is
  - b. when you bring it down to it's most basic core, you end up with only two possible worldviews
  - c. one is *Theism* and the other is *Materialism*
3. *Theism* comes from the Greek word for God – Theos
  - a. the *theistic worldview* believes that the ultimate reality is God
  - b. He is eternal and all powerful and brought all things into existence
  - c. the ultimate *goal* of creation is to give glory to God and acknowledge Him as it's Source and Head
4. The other worldview is *materialism*
  - a. matter is all there ever has always been and all there ever will be
  - b. there is no God, no over arching plan or purpose
  - c. and so human beings are merely a part of the big machine called the universe
  - d. we're the result of the chance collisions of molecules billions of years ago
  - e. consequently, there is no such thing as *morality*
  - f. right and wrong, good and evil are myths that we invent to describe personal and cultural *preferences*
5. The Biblical, theistic worldview says that morality is real and has substance because it is rooted in the character and nature of God who has established both physical *and* spiritual laws to govern the universe
  - a. if you violate the *physical* law of gravity, you get hurt
  - b. and if you violate *spiritual* law, there are consequences
  - c. whether physical or spiritual, *obedience* to the law brings *blessing*
6. Now, here's the problem – many modern Christians hold *both* worldviews without ever realizing they are in complete contradiction to each other
  - a. they have divided their lives into two categories - the *religious* and the *secular*

- b. when they go to church on Sundays, (when there isn't something else going on) they feel very comfortable seeing things through the eyes of faith
  - c. but their *workaday* mind is completely *materialistic*
  - d. instead of asking "What glorifies God?" they ask, "What works?"  
**That's not Christianity – that pragmatism, a materialist method!**
  - e. instead of asking, "What's right and good?" they ask, "What will make me feel good."  
**That's not Christianity – that's existentialism – another materialist philosophy!**
7. So many of the false teachings we see sweeping through the church today aren't so much *bad theology* as they are a reflection that the Christian mind has become schizophrenic!
- a. the health and wealth error is nothing more than *sanctified materialism* and *hedonism*
  - b. the whole heavenly laughter movement is merely *sanctified existentialism*

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. What Are We To Do?

1. What are we to do? How do we respond?
2. Each of us needs to bring our self before the penetrating gaze of God and ask Him to search us and try our thoughts - see if there be any wicked way in us
3. We must be diligent to renew our minds so that we might think God's thoughts after Him
4. There is no better way to renew our minds that to *prayerfully immerse* ourselves in God's Word.
5. As the Lord to fill you with His Spirit each day
6. And ask Him to show you whether in fact He has your mind or the world does

Psalm 139:

- 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my thoughts;**
- 24 And see if *there is* any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.**