

Message Three

**The Two Evils of God's People
and God's Faithfulness in Fulfilling His Economy**

Scripture Reading: Jer. 2:13; Psa. 36:8-9;
John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13

I. Jeremiah, a book full of speaking concerning Israel's sin and God's wrath, chastisement, and punishment, reveals that God's intention in His economy is to be the fountain, the source, of living waters to dispense Himself into His chosen people for their satisfaction and enjoyment with the goal of producing the church, God's counterpart, as God's increase, God's enlargement, to be God's fullness for His expression; the kernel of the divine revelation is that God created us and redeemed us for the purpose of working Himself into us to be our life and our everything—2:13; Psa. 36:8-9; John 3:29-30; 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; Rev. 7:17; Eph. 3:16-19:

- A. Christ as the living, spiritual rock was smitten by the authority of God's law so that the water of life in resurrection could flow out of Him and into His redeemed people for them to drink—Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4.
- B. Our drinking of the one Spirit in resurrection makes us members of the Body, builds us up as the Body, and prepares us to be the bride of Christ—12:13; Rev. 22:17.

II. "My people have committed two evils: / They have forsaken Me, / The fountain of living waters, / To hew out for themselves cisterns, / Broken cisterns, / Which hold no water"—Jer. 2:13:

- A. Israel should have drunk of God as the fountain of living waters that they might become His increase as His expression, but instead they committed two evils:
 - 1. They forsook God as their fountain, their source, and they turned to a source other than God; these two evils govern the entire book of Jeremiah.
 - 2. The hewing out of cisterns portrays Israel's toil in their human labor to make something (idols) to replace God.
 - 3. That the cisterns were broken and could hold no water indicates that apart from God Himself dispensed into us as living water, nothing can quench our thirst and make us God's increase for His expression—John 4:13-14.

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- B. In the eyes of God, the wicked one, the evildoer, is the one who does not come to drink of Him (Isa. 55:7); the evil condition of the wicked is that they do not come to the Lord to eat, drink, and enjoy the Lord; they do many things, but they do not come to contact the Lord, to take Him, to receive Him, to taste Him, and to enjoy Him; in the sight of God, nothing is more evil than this (57:20-21; cf. 55:1-2).
- C. God intended to dispense Himself into man as man's satisfaction so that He might be enlarged, but man became unfaithful and unchaste and forsook God for idols:
 - 1. An idol in our heart (Ezek. 14:3) is anything within us that we love and treasure more than the Lord and that replaces the Lord in our life (1 John 5:21):
 - a. Those who set up idols in their hearts are estranged from the Lord through their idols (Ezek. 14:5).
 - b. All who have idols within them yet seek God in an outward way cannot find Him (v. 3; cf. Jer. 29:13).
 - 2. By worshipping idols, Israel made themselves vain, nothing; they had so many idols that the number of them was according to the number of their cities (2:5, 28; 11:13); Israel exchanged the reality of their God, their glory, for the vanity of idols (2:11; Psa. 106:20; Rom. 1:23).
 - 3. Apostasy is a matter of leaving the way of God and taking another way to follow things other than God; it is to forsake God and turn to idols—Jer. 2:19.
 - 4. When Israel was captured by the Babylonians, God's people still would not give up their idols and had to carry them from the good land to Babylon; anything that replaces God or occupies the position of God is an idol that becomes a burden to the worshipper—Isa. 46:1.
 - 5. The dumb, voiceless idols (1 Cor. 12:2; Hab. 2:18-20) make their worshippers dumb and voiceless, but the living God causes His worshippers to speak in His Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3b; Psa. 115:4-8; 2 Cor. 4:13; Psa. 116:12-13):
 - a. No worshippers of God should be silent; all should use their voices to speak forth "Jesus is Lord!" in the Spirit of God.
 - b. This—to speak "Jesus is Lord"—is the main function of all the spiritual gifts; to call on the Lord's name with a proper

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spirit is the way to participate in, to enjoy, and to experience the Holy Spirit—1 Cor. 12:3b; cf. Rom. 14:17.

- c. “The dead do not praise Jehovah, / Nor do any that go down into silence. / But we will bless Jehovah / From now and to eternity. / Hallelujah”—Psa. 115:17-18.
6. Whatever we possess and even whatever we are can become an idol; Israel was evil and unfaithful to God in forsaking God for idols; in the matter of such unfaithfulness to God, we are the same as Israel.

III. We need to see God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His economy—cf. 37:3:

- A. Although we are unfaithful, God is faithful (Lam. 3:23b); the chorus of a well-known hymn (*Hymns*, #19) says, “Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! / Morning by morning new mercies I see. / All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; / Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!”:
 1. We may understand what the Bible says and what this hymn says about God’s faithfulness either in a natural way or in a spiritual way.
 2. If we understand God’s faithfulness in a natural way, we may think that He is faithful primarily in the matter of material provisions or physical blessings, but God’s faithfulness is not according to our natural understanding; 1 Corinthians 1:9 says that God is faithful in calling us into the fellowship of His Son, but to our natural understanding He may not seem to be faithful in caring for our welfare.
 3. “Consider the sufferings of the apostle Paul. He was called, commissioned, burdened, and sent by God, but wherever he went, he had troubles. For example, as soon as he began to preach Christ, he began to suffer persecution. He even had to escape from Damascus by being lowered down the wall in a basket. Does this mean that God was not faithful to Paul? No, it means that God’s faithfulness is not according to our natural understanding” (*Life-study of Jeremiah*, p. 28)—Acts 9:15-16, 23-25; 2 Cor. 11:30-33; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; Rev. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:10; 3:12.
 4. When we believed into the Lord Jesus, we might have expected to have outward peace and blessing, but instead, we

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might have had many troubles, and we might have lost our security, our health, or our possessions; when some Christians experience such things, they may question God's faithfulness and ask why He did not prevent hardships from happening to them—Acts 14:22; 1 Thes. 3:2-5.

5. We need to realize that in allowing us to have troubles, God is faithful in His purpose to turn us from idols and bring us back to Himself; our peace, safety, health, and possessions may become idols to us, but God is faithful to take these things away so that we may drink of Him as the fountain of living waters.
 6. For example, if our house or our possessions become idols to us, we drink of them and not of God; God's faithfulness is a matter of dealing with these idols and causing us to drink of Him—Psa. 36:8.
 7. God is faithful in leading us into His economy (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Thes. 5:23-24), and His economy is for us to drink Christ, to eat Christ, to enjoy Christ, to absorb Christ, and to assimilate Christ so that God may have His increase with us to fulfill His economy.
 8. We need to see that we are not better than Israel; anything can become an idol to us, but God is faithful in fulfilling His economy; in His faithfulness He deals with our idols so that we may drink of Him; we all need to drink of God as the fountain of living waters, receiving Christ into us and assimilating Him so that He may increase for the fulfillment of God's economy to have His expression through us as His counterpart—John 3:29-30.
- B. If we realize that we have been unfaithful to God, we may repent and weep, but then we should begin to drink of the living waters, praising God, giving thanks to Him for everything, and enjoying Him (1 Thes. 5:16-18); this is what God wants; God is not interested in anything other than our enjoyment of Christ:
1. We may think that because of our failure, we are hopeless; surely, the people of Israel must have felt that God had given them up and that they were finished, but God's compassions do not fail; rather, they are new every morning—Lam. 3:22-23.

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2. Jeremiah could even declare that Jehovah was his portion and that he hoped in Him, for He is good to those who wait on Him; there is hope in God because with God there is no disappointment—vv. 24-25; cf. Psa. 16:5; 73:25-26.
3. Our failure opens the way for Christ to come in to be our righteousness and our redemption and also to dispense Himself into us to be our life and life law with its capacity to know God and to live God; in other words, our failure simply prepares and opens the way for Christ to come in so that He may be exalted in and through us to be our centrality and universality—Jer. 23:5-6; 31:33-34; Col. 1:17b, 18b.
4. If we fail God today, we should not be disappointed; God has a way to deal with us and cause us to mature and become the New Jerusalem, either as His overcoming bride in the next age or as His wife for eternity—Heb. 6:1a.
5. There is no need for us to worry about our situation; God is patient, sympathetic, and compassionate, and He will take the time to make us mature:
 - a. Every believer, whether presently weak or strong, will be a constituent of the New Jerusalem, and everyone there will be mature—Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2.
 - b. Therefore, we should not be dismayed or discouraged; rather, we should be encouraged and comforted with the God of all comfort and encouragement—2 Cor. 1:3-4; Rom. 15:5.
 - c. We should be the true worshippers of God, who is the fountain of living waters, by drinking Him so that He can be the reality within us, which eventually becomes our genuineness and sincerity in which we worship God with the worship that He seeks—John 4:23-24.