

## **Dr. Allan MacRae: Jeremiah: Lecture 4**

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### **Jeremiah's troubles versus Post-Christian Culture [0:0]**

We have been having assignments lately that feature events in Jeremiah's life in the time of Zedekiah, and we have seen a little of what he had to go through at that time as he stood for God in a nation that had had a tremendous revival under Josiah, maybe 20 years before, but had largely lost the results of it and had turned away from God. This era is much similar to our own time here, which might be called by the phrase a "post-Christian" era. So the book of Jeremiah has very great relevance to us today. Now, here is a book which is not a commentary on Jeremiah, and it is not a discussion of the problems we are taking up in this class, but it is an application of them to our present time. The book is called *Death in the City* by Dr. Francis Schaeffer. And right at this point there are a couple of pages of it that are so appropriate that I would like to read them to you.

### ***Death in the City* by Francis Schaeffer and Jeremiah [1:10]**

On page 65 he says, "We have already had a glimpse of the personal results to Jeremiah that the preaching of judgment brings. In Anathoth the people said, 'Keep quiet or we're going to kill you.'" We haven't looked at that particular chapter yet. That was in the early part of his ministry. "The threats to his liberty were not idle, for we read in Jeremiah 20:2, 'Then Pashur smote Jeremiah and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord.' The first thing they did was to fasten him in the stocks. Poor Jeremiah, who had been preaching faithfully in the

post-Christian culture, finds himself in the stocks. But his punishment didn't end there. The stocks were not enough for him, so they put him in prison. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem and Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in king's house. Just as his prophecy is coming true, just as the King of Babylon is at the doors, just as the false prophets are being proven wrong, Jeremiah is put into prison, the prison that is in the King's house. Those who know of Doge's palace in Venice can picture this, because that palace contained the most important prison. Apparently it was the same here. Later on in 33:1 Jeremiah's still in prison. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah a second time while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison. But even that was not the end. In Jeremiah 37:15-16, we read, 'Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison. When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days.'

### **Increased Punishment of Jeremiah [3:00]**

"So they gradually increased the punishment from the stocks to the prison to the dungeon. Finally, as we read in Jeremiah 38:4 and 6, everyone must be moved. For here is a man of flesh and blood like ourselves in a historic space-time situation with his own aspirations and he's carted off and put into a dungeon, and now his very life is threatened. 'Therefore the princes said unto the king, "We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city.'" That is, Jeremiah's not giving an optimistic answer. He's not saying that everything's going to

turn out well. He isn't saying there's an easy solution, all we need is a little more technical advance to make the grade. He's cutting down their humanistic optimism, saying that they're under the judgment of God and thereby weakening the people, undercutting their morale. They said, 'for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.' Of course it's not true! Jeremiah's wanting their real welfare. He is saying you must be healed of your real disease, which is your revolt against God, and not merely of some superficial, external wound. But that didn't please the dignitaries, so we read, 'Then Zedekiah the king said, 'Behold, he is in your hand,' for the king is not he that can do any thing against you. Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon the was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.'

"The story would make a vivid drama, but it is not merely a piece of theater. Jeremiah, a man like yourself, was put into the innermost dungeon, where they put a rope around his arms and lowered him down into the mire. As he went down he must have wondered, what are my feet going to touch? He wasn't going to drown, but there was mud at the bottom, and as they let him down he sunk. And he sunk and he sunk and he sunk, to his knees to his waist to his armpits. We do not know when he was there, but he was there as a result to his faithful preaching and God's judgment to a post-Christian world. It's no small thing to stick with the message. It's easy to walk out. Both hippies and evangelicals easily can opt out into their own little ghetto, saying nice things to themselves and closing their eyes to the real situation that's around them. One can opt

out in many ways, but if one really preaches the word of God to a post-Christian world, one must understand that he is likely to end up like Jeremiah.

### **Jeremiah's Psychological Trials [5:59]**

"We must not think that Jeremiah's trials were merely physical—they were psychological as well. For Jeremiah never saw any change in his own lifetime. He knew that seventy years later the people would return, but he wouldn't live to see it. Jeremiah, like every man, lived existentially on the knife-edge of time moment by moment, and like all of us, he lived day by day within the confines of his own lifetime. Jeremiah was not just a piece of cardboard, he had a psychological life just as you and I have. How then was he affected? There were times when Jeremiah stood in discouragement, overwhelmed by preaching the message of God faithfully to his culture and ending up in the stock, the prison, and the dungeon. You say how can a man of God be discouraged? Anybody who asks that has never been in the midst of a battle. He understands nothing about a real struggle for God. We're real men, we're this side of the fall; we're not perfect. We have our dreams, our psychological needs, and we want to be fulfilled. There are times of heroism, when we stand firm and are faithful in preaching to men who will not listen, but there are also those times when we feel overwhelmed." I think there's a very fine treatment in this book by Dr. Schaeffer, *Death in the City*, of the application of much of this material in Jeremiah to our own time.

### **Autobiography of Jeremiah's Life [7:31]**

Now we have been looking particularly at events in the later part of Jeremiah's life. We have much more autobiography there than we have in the early part. But there's

a considerable amount in the early part. And I think we understand the early part much better by having a realization of where Jeremiah is and what he had to go through before he was finished. And so we have taken this material to get a good glimpse of the time of Zedekiah to this point.

But now I want to go back and start near the beginning of the book. And in general, the rest of the time, we will go through the book in order. I'm not going to give you a detailed outline of it. It is not an easy book to outline. And you can easily see why this could be. The experiences that he went through, were written down in the midst of these experiences, and most of them consist of what he actually said in standing before the people. And now you remember, they were written down later as he remembered them, and then the king cut his earlier work up, and then he re-dictated it with other material in between, and then at a later time certain later events, which seemed to him to fit in certain places of his re-dictated book, were inserted in those places.

### **Final Chapters on the Foreign Nations and the LXX placement [8:41]**

So the book is not strictly chronological, but in general there is a chronological arrangement to the book. In general, it starts with the beginning of his life, of course, and it goes on in the book to the end of his ministry. Toward the end there are a few chapters that perhaps don't belong at the very end if you want to be strictly chronological, but which from a viewpoint of subject matter are placed at the very end of the book. In fact, those chapters which are placed at the end are the chapters in which he deals with foreign nations and tells of God's judgment against these nations.

That part, in the Septuagint, is inserted in the middle of chapter 25, back there

where it tells how Jeremiah gave messages of God's punishment to other nations. There the Septuagint has the last few chapters of Jeremiah except the last chapter. I don't know if the translator of the Septuagint was trying to make the whole thing more chronological than it is by inserting these chapters at that point. I think that the arrangement that we have in the Hebrew is probably better because the subject matter is quite different and therefore, even though they were given probably long before the end of his ministry, it's better to have them at the end of the book. But aside from these chapters, the book is in general quite chronological.

### **Jeremiah's Life under Josiah [9:53]**

The events of Jeremiah's life would fall under four headings. First would be the events under Josiah. In the early chapters is doubtless material that he gave in the time of Josiah. That would be from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah; in other words, the first five years of Jeremiah's ministry were before the great revival that Josiah conducted. And then from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> year would be after the great revival, but there's no division in the book of Jeremiah to show us whether particular chapters come before or after that event. But there are the early chapters of the book, perhaps at least a third of the book, consisting of what he said during that period, interspersed with occasional complaints by him and an occasional reference to an event and an occasional prayer by him. And so as this sits in the Hebrew, it just goes right straight along, and since most of you are reading the King James version, too, we have to supply our own headings and make our own divisions. It makes it way more convenient use the chapter divisions that were put in by the archbishop in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In another way they are apt to be

misleading because quite frequently the archbishop wasn't very good as to where divisions should be made. But that is the first part of his ministry under Josiah, and at least a third of the book probably came during that time.

### **Jeremiah under Jehoiakim [11:16]**

The second part of the book cannot be sharply divided from the first. There are chapters we know belong in the second part because of the dates, but we don't know how much of the first part may have been in the second period or may have been repeated then. The second period, of course, would be under Jehoiakim. We don't need make a special division for the three months reign of Jehoahaz, who was carried off by Pharaoh Necho into Egypt because we have no evidence whether any particular part of the book was written during those three months or not. So the second part, or period, is under Jehoiakim, a period in which Jeremiah was protected. There were many leaders among the people who had a strong desire to protect him, and they did. We read some time ago about how the king wanted to kill him and the leaders prevented him. But the king was able to send clear to Egypt to get another prophet who had given a message very similar to Jeremiah's and seize him in Egypt and bring him back and kill him. And so we see that the king's hatred was very great, his power was great, and that these officials must have had a very great interest in Jeremiah and a very great power in the kingdom that they were able to protect him during that time. We have a number of chapters which are specifically connected to his relationship with Jehoiakim. Some of the first part of the book may have been given at that time or may have been repeated at that time. Of course, where it's not stated we don't know.

### **Jeremiah under Zedekiah [12:46]**

Then the third part, of course, is under Zedekiah. This was a time when Jeremiah was greatly honored by some. Remember how Ebed-Melech was able to preserve his life, even though he was probably not a man of great influence, but he was placed in a strategic position there where he was able to bring Jeremiah's complaint to the king and he was able, under the king's orders, to take thirty men and go and rescue Jeremiah out of the dungeon in the deep mire in which he had been. But the leaders of the people at this time seem to have been quite hostile to Jeremiah and wanted to kill him. But the king, though he was a weak king, afraid of the corrupt leaders left over from Jehoikim's time, was able to protect him during that period.

### **Jeremiah after the Fall of Jerusalem [13:32]**

Now there is a fourth period, a brief one, after the fall of Jerusalem, and we have a few rather interesting and important events that took place in Jeremiah's life and prophecies specifically given at that time. We haven't looked at them yet, but we will leave them until we come to them in going through the book.

Now, as I said, we cannot divide the book strictly into these four divisions. We cannot do it because it is not arranged strictly chronologically. We cannot be sure in some cases at which time a prophecy was given, but in general it's rather clear. And of course the last section was after the fall of Jerusalem and is quite definite in the book. Jeremiah might have repeated some of his earlier messages, but we have no reason to think he gave new messages other than those that are specifically designated as such for that period.



## **Jeremiah 1: The Call of Jeremiah [14:20]**

Now I want to start going through the book. I think what you've looked at so far gives you a background that makes it much easier to understand than if we had simply started at the first chapter without having looked at these later chapters to some extent. I'm not going to divide this part into main headings because it is rather difficult to do that, but simply as sections. And so the first section would, of course, be the first chapter. That we have already looked at. Section one of the book would be chapter one, which is Jeremiah's call. And the statements in that chapter which we looked at about how God was going to bring punishment, you've already seen the fulfillment of it in what we've looked at thus far. There is a statement relating to this in chapter 1 verse 18, "Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you. For I am with you and will rescue you, declares the Lord." Jeremiah in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah had no realization of just what these verses meant, but certainly as time went on and he had this tremendous opposition, and saw others being killed for doing exactly what he was doing, and saw the tremendous effort, opposition and antagonism, the denial of God in the land, he must have realized how wonderful it was that God had given him this promise. But occasionally he gives way to great complaints and we have expression of his terrible sorrow, of his times when he is threatened, almost driven to give up the work that he'd entered into. And I think for you as a person who is truly going to serve the Lord these days that the book of Jeremiah is a tremendous help to you in your own personal life. You can see how God led

Jeremiah, how he directed him, and what he accomplished through him, and know that if you're entirely true to him, he may accomplish a great deal through you, too, but you have to be ready to go against all obstacles, difficulties, and discouragements as he did.

### **No Promise of Protection to All [16:26]**

The book does not give any one of us an assurance that we have a long life and be able to effectively serve the Lord. It does not promise us that because we have seen the account of the other prophet who gave the same message as Jeremiah, but who was killed. Thus we see that it may be God's will to use us through a long life of loyalty to him or it may be his will that we should witness to him by suffering and death. But the book should be a great encouragement to us not to abandon the task or turn aside as so many do when the going gets hard. God has some of his servants where things work out smoothly and a great deal of things seem to be accomplished; others face tremendous obstacles and don't seem to accomplish much, but if they're really true to the Lord, no one can say how great the amount may be that they are really accomplishing for Him; only God knows the results. He wants us to be faithful, and he knows truly which results are tremendously important and which aren't.

### **The Terms "Israel" and "Judah" [17:24]**

So this first chapter, I think, is a good chapter to read over when you become discouraged at times. But then, as the second section, I've already given a very general title to, "Judah's Sin Against God." This second section is emphasizing particularly the people among whom Jeremiah was living. So I'm using the word "Judah" at the start because, as you know, Jeremiah was in the southern kingdom. The Northern Kingdom

had been taken into exile to Assyria about one hundred years before this time about 722 B.C. And so you can naturally expect that most of Jeremiah's efforts will be spent in dealing with the people of the southern kingdom, the kingdom which could now be called the kingdom of Israel because the northern one was gone. Two-thirds of the people were already in exile, therefore it could take the title of "Israel," and yet, when there was a northern kingdom that was larger, this northern kingdom took the name Israel. Sometimes the southern kingdom was called by the name of the largest tribe, the Kingdom of Judah, and both terms, Israel and Judah are now used for the southern kingdom. So when you find the term "Israel," you must always ask yourself at this time three questions: does this term "Israel" relate to the Kingdom of Judah, which is the surviving Israel kingdom; is it a term for the whole nation here; or is it here speaking historically back to the Northern Kingdom. This illustrates the ambiguity of the human language that the term is used in those three ways.

### **Words and Inerrancy [18:56]**

Actually, there are comparatively few terms in any language that have more than one possibility of interpretation. I was thinking the other day about inerrancy. Is a word in the Scripture inerrant? I think the answer is a single word cannot be inerrant. How can a word be inerrant because a word doesn't give you any meaning. I say "Hatfield," what does that say? It says nothing, nothing at all. You don't know what Hatfield it is, whether it is speaking of the palace in which Queen Elizabeth first lived before she became queen, or whether it is speaking of a city in Nebraska, or whether it is speaking of a town in Pennsylvania. I've even heard people say "Hatfield" simply referring to the

seminary here. The word Hafield can be used in many ways. A single word cannot be considered inerrant because it conveys no meaning. So you have to have more meaning; you have to have a sentence, and in most cases a sentence needs context, so you understand what a word really says. Almost any sentence can give you a little meaning, but almost any sentence raises more questions than it answers, and you need context to know what a word really says.

### **Judah's Sin against God: Jer. 2 [20:01]**

So in this case I am specifically going to call this section, "Judah's Sin Against God." And it would seem to be rather likely coming right after the account of his call, that this was one of his first messages. Jeremiah 2:1, "The word of God came to me, go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem." And then he starts in very naturally, "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord. The firstfruits of his harvest; all who devoured here were held guilty and disaster overtook them, declares the Lord."

What a recollection that is. What a summary of the way that God delivered them from Egypt and brought the plagues upon the Egyptians, the way He protected them in the journey through the wilderness, and the way that He enabled them to conquer all the land of Canaan. God's tremendous blessing to them in the past is here summarized, thinking particularly about the early days of the Israelites.

And then he says in chapter 2 verse 5, "What fault did your fathers find in me, that they strayed so far from me. They followed worthless idols and became worthless

themselves.” And then he continues up through verse 8 speaking of the marvelous blessings that God had given the people and the way that the people had turned against God. Then in chapter 2 verse 9 he makes his arraignment: “Therefore I bring charges against you again, declares the Lord. And I will bring charges against your children’s children. Cross over to the coasts of Kittim and look. Send to Kedar.” Now Kittim is a name that refers to all the areas to the west. As some try to prove that Kittim refers specifically to Crete but that is highly questioned. There was a small settlement in Crete that had a name somewhat similar to the word Kittim. Whether the name "Kittim" comes from that town or whether the name was already there before the town, we don’t know.

### **Kittim [22:04]**

I was sent a copy of a section from a new translation that someone is preparing. They asked me to look it over; it wasn’t in Jeremiah, it was a different section, but I looked it over and they had in it translated "Kittim" as Crete. And I wrote strongly urging them to change that because the name is clearly used for almost any region west of Palestine. From Palestine you look out at the Mediterranean sea, and the name is sometimes translated "coastland" or "isles" in the King James and other translations. It is that whole area there that is viewed as "Kittim." And so in this case it simply means, "look way off to the west." Look at the coasts for Kittim and send to Kedar and observe closely. And Kedar is the name of a section of Arabia. So that refers to the east. What he’s really saying is to look in all directions. “Look to the west and look to the east and observe closely, see if there’s ever been anything like this, has a nation ever changed its

gods? (yet they are not gods at all) but my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols.”

### **Nations Changing Their Gods [23:17]**

Now, are you going to take this as meaning that up to that time no nation has ever changed its gods? I think that would be jumping pretty far for a conclusion from what it says. It is a rhetorical statement. Maybe none ever had up to that time, but certainly there have been instances where nations have change their gods. In American today, as a whole, certainly most of our universities, certainly in the great mass of the educated people today, the allegiance is not being paid to the God of the Bible but to the humanistic idea that deifies man. And there are many blatant expressions that there is no power except man, and man is only the result of a series of accidents.

I was much impressed a good many years ago when I visited Constantinople, to hear a story of something that I was told had happened to a tourist who came through at the time. And they said that there in the cool of the morning when it was quite chilly they saw the Muslims there washing their feet in order to be able to go into the mosque because there they have to take off their shoes to go into the mosque. This American who observed it was quite overwhelmed and said, “Imagine those people, it makes me shiver to see them there in the cold washing their feet in order to go into the mosque. There must be something to this business of religion after all if it will have that effect on people.” Well, it really is a shock to see that attitude of many in America today that they simply turn away like the people in Israel had from the one who has established us and given us all that we have. "Has a nation ever changed its gods?" Well, it implies that the

Jews were exchanging gods. But you would find the loyalty of many who believe in lies, who believe in false gods, is so great that it puts to shame many of us who claim to believe in the true God and who have experienced salvation through Christ.

Jeremiah says, “Has a nation ever changed its gods, yet they’re not gods at all, but my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols.” And of course, in America a great part of our educated class has exchanged that which made America great for that which is purely imaginative.

### **NASB, NIV and KJV: Comments on Translations [25:30]**

For that which does not profit is, of course, the idols in that case. Of course in our case it is not physical idols. That is all a problem in translation. If you’re going to use the New American Standard, by the way, let me say this: that if you know Hebrew and Greek but don’t want to take the time to look everything up in these languages, you can find the New American Standard probably the most useful than any translation because it follows the original very, very closely. It follows it so closely that one who doesn’t know Hebrew or Greek often fails to get the meaning at all from it because it follows the original idioms, and there are places like this where what it refers to is clearly understood, but that the average reader might not catch it. And so after you know Hebrew and Greek, it is a most useful tool. Now the New International Version has tried to give the meaning in a way that can be understood easily by people today who don’t know Hebrew and Greek and to preserve as much of the beauty of the original as it can. It cannot conserve as much as the King James does because the King James was written in a language that was far more beautiful than the English language today--the language

of three hundred years ago. But of course none of us understand very well the language of three hundred years ago. I've been amazed how many people have read the King James Version all their lives and don't know the difference between "you" and "ye." I've found very few who know the difference between "you" and "ye," and yet they are used consistently all through the Bible with a definite difference of usage between them. But people read and read and read the Old Testament "you" and "ye" and have no idea what the difference is. It simply shows how we need a Bible in our own language.

Now, if you're going to put the Bible in your own language you have to insert words occasionally to make the meaning clear to the reader in your day. And the King James does that a great deal. But when they do, they put these words in italics. And today very few people recognize what italics mean in the King James and they're apt to emphasize those words that are inserted instead of merely realizing that they are words not in the Hebrew or the Greek that are inserted into English in order to make the meaning clear. I don't know of any modern version that uses italics the way the King James does. And so in most of them you find words inserted that perhaps sometimes go a little too far. The New International Version has tried very hard to be accurate, but it also has tried very hard to get excellent English and clear English, and I've been on committees working on it when we've come to a verse and one person says, "Well, here's what it means," and another person says, "Yes, but that doesn't convey meaning to people today. That's jumpy; that's awkward; that doesn't convey today's meaning. Do it this way." Then another one says, "Yes, that's a beautiful presentation of the meaning of that verse, but it's not what the original says." And then we have worked for a whole



hour trying this, that, and the other, and eventually at the end of the hour we have made a translation of the verse which we all agree was very, very close to the original and was in good, clear English. But you can't spend an hour on every verse or you'd probably have to spend ten or fifteen years making a translation. And so there are many cases where the NIV translations are most remarkably excellent. And there are other cases where the difference between two possibilities has been decided by five to four people on a particular committee. And I was on the four side of the number in those cases, and I am sure that there is no one who participated in the NIV translation who would agree with everything that is in the translation of it. But I think everyone who was on it would agree that the translation is much better than any one of us could have done by ourselves. I think it is a very good translation, but I find occasionally a point where it changes the meaning from the King James where I think the meaning in the King James really represents the original better. So the best thing is to follow the Hebrew and the Greek for yourself. But I have found myself that many times using the NIV, for sections I didn't work on, the meaning just comes right out, where I have read it over and over in the King James before and never stopped to think about the fact that I really didn't understand what that verse meant. I just kept seeing words without realizing that I had not gotten more than a superficial idea of what the words actually meant.

### **Exchanging Their Glory and Carl Sagan [30:34]**

So in this case, "You've exchanged their Glory for worthless idols," in the whole context he's teaching about God. If you want to say "for worthless gods that are no gods," you might want to say for "worthless forces," or something like that would fit today

better. If you take a book like *Cosmos* by Carl Sagan, he has got most tremendously interesting material about the stars and the planets, and some material about ancient history where he's not always completely accurate, but he's got some interesting points, some material in biology and paleontology, which of course, he's gotten from others and can't really speak as an authority, but as you read the book you get the feeling of the tremendous thing that man has accomplished, and how we're able now to send out rockets so far, and to send out satellites so far and what tremendous things we've accomplished. But if you read it closely and carefully, you will find every now and then that there is that which shows after all how futile it is. When you get into it, you find him describing a universe that is utterly limitless, so limitless that nobody could possibly comprehend it, so you'll just get the feeling, well, what is man? Just like a little ant that could be run over by a car going by and that's the end of it. And then as to what it all amounts to, in one place he says perhaps every tiny electron is itself a whole universe as complex as our whole universe. And then within that great universe, every electron in it is another great universe. Perhaps our whole universe is just a tiny electron of another one that much bigger. Well, these things are scattered here and there through his book, but they make your head swim. They make you realize, if you stop to think, that he has no answer for anything actually, just a lot of detail that is wonderful, that we've been able to learn, but is a tiny bit in proportion to what God has done. Our knowledge is infinitesimally small compared to what God knows. Sagan's philosophy is that everything is purely accidental. He describes the marvelous intricacy of the universe and then imagines that it is made just by accident and entirely by accident. This is purely

utter nonsense. But you don't get that impression unless you read it carefully. You could easily imagine most readers of it get the impression, "My, what wonders man has accomplished, there's no end to it." He says actually, if man doesn't destroy himself in the next few centuries, we may be having communication with other people, with other intelligent beings, way off millions, billions, trillions of miles away; we may be having communication with them. How wonderful. But what will we say? What will it amount to? What understanding will it give you of what life is all about anyway?

And so, "My people have exchanged their Glory for that which is worthless." As it has application to our day, the word "idol" would seem out of place. But as it has application to the context, and what he is immediately talking about, the word "idol" exactly fits. So we come face to face with the real problem of translation there. Any translation is to some extent an interpretation.

### **On Forsaking Springs and Using Broken Cistern [34:00]**

And then he says in Jer. 2:12, "Be appalled at this, oh heavens, and shudder with great horror. My people have committed two sins. They have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." Now there's a tremendous verse exactly describing America today, exactly describing our Western world today. In fact, describing most of the thinking world, most of the moving world, those who are really doing things, they have largely forsaken God and dug their own cisterns, and their cisterns that can't hold water, whether they be the humanistic, egoistic ideas of our western world, or whether they be the communist ideas that are strong in the eastern world and that have a great fascination for so many people here in

the west. In both cases, they are broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

And he continues with this rebuke of their sin. This second section I'm going to consider from chapter 2 verse 1 to chapter 3:5 as "Judah's Sin Against God." Now, as you go through these sections and you see this tremendous denunciation, as you see the way he speaks about these people, I don't know how many people stop to realize how unique it is, what a tremendous thing it is, that this book, that this Bible, should have been kept by the Jews, that it should have been preserved by them, that it should be considered by them as their Holy Scripture.

### **Frederick the Great of Prussia: The Jews as proof of God's existence [35:28]**

Frederick the Great was an atheistic, cynical military leader of Prussia 200 years ago. Yet his people were largely Christians. Christianity was being taught all throughout his kingdom. He had his court chaplain, and he turned to the chaplain one time and he said, give me in a word something that proves Christianity. And the chaplain said, "the Jews," and the continuance of the Jews when all the nations have disappeared. The continuance of Egypt today is not the same people as ancient Egypt, not the same language, not the same customs; its entirely different. And that is true of those that preserve the names of Egyptian times and those that don't preserve the names. But the Jews have continued as a distinct group even though they have been scattered throughout all the world, just as the Bible said that they would be. But I don't think that many people who realize even the uniqueness of the preservation of the Jews as a group, I don't think that many people, even those who realize this fact, realize the most amazing fact,

that they have kept as their sacred writing, which they treasure and which they look to with such reverence, the book we call the Old Testament.

### **Uniqueness of the Bible: No Glossing over Problems [36:39]**

You take the great writings that are treasured by any other nation that I've ever heard of and they tell you how great were the founders of their nation and what tremendous things they did and they have everything good to say about them (occasionally they will make a mistake), but to preserve and to honor writings that denounce their people, that accuse them of all kinds of sin, that accuse them of forsaking their God, and use strong terms and criticism with the attack that we find in so many parts of the Old Testament, and that we find greatly in Isaiah and still more in Jeremiah, for a nation to take writings like that and preserve them and treasure them and honor them through the ages, it's absolutely unique. And we can be sure that it is no Jewish chauvinism or pride in their nation that led them to preserve these books and consider them as holy books they should follow. It's because God marvelously led the people to treasure the writings of Jeremiah and not the writings of his opponents, the false prophets, of whom you will find there were many in that time. And the writings of others who simply glorified the nation, they did not preserve writings of that type. But they did preserve writings that no nation from a purely human perspective would ever think of preserving, honoring and glorifying. But these were the writings of God given to these people whom he had called for his purpose. They preserved them and treasured them.

### **Why do you go to Egypt and Assyria? [38:02]**

And so we find these great rebukes, as Jeremiah continues, "Why do you go to Egypt and go to Assyria." (2:18) In other words, you're looking for help from all sorts of clever ideas. For example, we think if we're going to get plenty of oil, we've got to give Arabs all the technology and means of defending themselves that we can, even if they have a most absolute dictator in the world who may take over by some revolutionary force the next year. Just like the Iranians were three or four years ago. Who knows what it's going to be, but we think that by trying to please them, we are going to win safety for ourselves and to get plenty of oil for ourselves. So he says in answer to that sort of thing in Jer. 2:18, "Why go to Egypt to drink water from the Shihor? Why go to Assyria to drink water from the Euphrates. Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of me." Now this second section which runs through Jeremiah chapter 3 verse 5 discusses Judah's sin against God.

Next we turn to the Northern Kingdom where we speak of both kingdoms, but we will look at the third section next time.

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