

## Jeremiah Chapter 2 Continued

**Jeremiah 2:19 "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."**

“Backslidings”: Jeremiah saw a whole generation of backslidden people who had fallen away from their godly moorings and walked away from God. One of the prominent words in the book is “backsliding”. It is so easy to live surrounded by religious reminders yet ignore the truth to which they point.

Compare 3:6, 8, 11-12, 14, 22; 8:5; 31:22; 49:4; Isa. 57:17; Hosea 11:7; 14:4. For clarification of the meaning (see note on Prov. 14:14).

We see from this, they will reap what they have sown. Their bondage will be bitter, because they have shown bitterness toward God by forsaking Him. God is very angry with them, because they did not fear or worship Him. This is like rebellion from a spoiled child. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. He leaves no doubt at all who speaks this. It is the Lord GOD of hosts.

**Jeremiah 2:20 "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."**

I.e. the bondage and tyranny that thou were under in “old time” in Egypt, also different times besides, as appears through the Book of Judges. The Hebrew *elam*, that signifies everlasting, is sometimes used for a long time to come, and also for a long time past (both here and Gen. 6:4; Isa. 57:11).

"And burst thy bands": A double allusion, either to the bands and fetters with which prisoners are bound (Jer. 40:4), or those bands wherewith the ends of the yoke of beasts were accustomed to be bound (Isa. 58:6).

"And you said, I will not transgress": When the deliverance was fresh, thou did form good resolutions. This translation is according to the marginal reading of the Massorettes. But in the Hebrew text, confirmed by the LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate, we read *לא אעבוד*, I will not serve, namely, Jehovah. It is said the meaning of the passage is, that even after the Jews had been freed by God from their Egyptian bondage, and admitted into an immediate covenant and alliance with him, they had been guilty of the utmost ingratitude in refusing obedience to the divine law, particularly in respect to the prohibition of idolatry.

"When upon every high hill, and under every green tree thou wanderest": Alluding to their worshipping their idols upon the hills, and under the trees; they “wanderest, playing the harlot”, worshipping false gods. As idolatry is frequently called whoredom in the Scripture language, so

the prophet describes the Israelites likening them to a strolling harlot, shamelessly seeking for lovers wherever she can.

“Playing the harlot”: committing idolatry, which is a spiritual harlotry (Jer. 3:1-2).

Those of you who have studied Exodus, know this is a very true statement. They would make promises to be faithful to God, if He would only help them. He would feel sorry for them, and forgive them. The minute God helped them out of their problems, they would go right back into disobedience to God again. God broke the yoke of the Egyptians, and brought them to the Promised Land. They were unfaithful over and over, but every time God would forgive them and give them a fresh start. This was spiritual harlotry here. The high places were a common place to go and worship false gods. “Under every green tree” had to do with grove worship of false gods.

**Jeremiah 2:21 "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?"**

The “noble vine” mentioned here was the Sorek, which was famous for the fine-tasting wine that came from its grapes. (For Israel as God’s vine see Isaiah 5:1-7 and Hosea 10:1).

The “vine” mentioned here implies the Vine which is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Vine, we Christians are the branches. The Jews were blessed with God in their fruitful vineyard. God had originally started them out right, but they had turned away from Him. The church is many times, spoken of as God's vineyard. God had forbidden cross breeding of vines in Leviticus. We can see from this, that to be a “degenerate plant of a strange vine”,; would be like a wild plant with no direction.

**Jeremiah 2:22 "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, [yet] thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD."**

Neither “nitre” (soda), nor “soap” could cleanse the filth of Israel’s spiritual harlotry.

God is not interested in the outward cleanliness of man. A clean heart is what is pleasing to God. We know that Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees "whited sepulchers" in the following verse.

Matthew 23:27 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead [men's] bones, and of all uncleanness."

You can wash all you want to on the outside, but it will not make you acceptable unto God. The cleanliness that God appreciates, is the inward cleanliness which comes from being washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Verses 23-25: Having turned from God, their deep desire for something beyond themselves had left them helpless before the temptation of idolatry, pursuing false gods with the same mindless and careless abandonment as animals in heat.

**Jeremiah 2:23 "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;"**

“Baalim”: An inclusive term referring collectively to false deities.

“Valley”: probably meant the valley of Hinnom (see the note on Jer. 7:32).

“Dromedary”: The nation, in chasing other idols, is depicted as a female camel pursuing its instinct, and as a wild donkey in heat sniffing the wind to find a mate, craving to attract others of its kind. Other pictures of Israel are that of a thief, who is ashamed when exposed (verse 26), and that of a virgin or a bride who forgets what beautifies her (verse 32).

Just to say you have not sinned is not enough. God knows the heart of man. These people had gone through the motion of worshipping God, but their hearts were far from Him. They went to the temple on the holy days, but did not even understand why they were going. Their hearts were not in the worship. It had just become a routine happening. This is much the case in churches today. We must not become religious in our worship. Christianity is a personal relationship with the Lord, not a set of rules to keep.

**Jeremiah 2:24 "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."**

One image of animal desire suggests another, and the “wild ass” appears (as in the Hebrew of Gen. 16:12; Job 11:12; Job 39:5), as an even stronger type of passion that defies control. The description is startling in its boldness, but has a parallel in that of Virgil.

"That snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure": Better, in the desire of her heart, as it bears to her the scent that draws her on. The “occasion” and the “month” are, of course, the season when the stimulus of animal desire is strongest. There is no need for the stallion to seek her with a weary search, she presents herself and pursues him. So, there was in Israel what we should describe as a mania for the idolatrous worship of the heathen.

This is speaking of the month of the year that we would call the mating season. This would mean no matter how far in the wilderness she was, the mate would find her. They do not care what happens to her, unless it benefits them. This is the way with false religion as well. No one is interested in her welfare. A false god cannot help the people who worship him.

**Jeremiah 2:25 "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."**

“Do not wear out thy shoes, or sandals, and expose thyself to thirst and weariness by undertaking long journeys, to make new alliances with idolaters,” explains Lowth, and many other expositors. “But I rather take it,” says Blaney, “to be a warning to beware of the consequences of pursuing the courses they were addicted to”. As if it had been said, take care that thou dost not expose thyself, by thy wicked ways, to the wretched condition of going into captivity unshod, as the manner is represented (Isa. 20:4). “And of serving thine enemies in hunger and in thirst, and in want of the necessaries of life” (Deut. 28:48).

"But thou saidst, There is no hope": The language of desperate sinners, who are resolved to continue in their wickedness, in spite of every reason that can be offered to the contrary.

"No; for I have loved strangers": strange gods, idols.

"And after them will I go": The Jews probably did not really speak in this manner, but they acted this way. This, the prophet signifies, was the language of their conduct. By their actions they professed that idolatry which they denied with their mouths.

This could perhaps, have something to do with dancing barefoot in the worship of Baal. They drink of the cup of sin. There is no hope in a false god. Sin carries guilt. These strangers imply false gods. To go after a false god brings no hope. The only hope is in the Lord.

Verses 26-28: Jeremiah’s almost mocking tone recalls the great confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40).

**Jeremiah 2:26 "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,"**

Taken in the fact, or convicted of it. That is, as the Targum explains it, “one that has been accounted faithful, and is found a thief”. For otherwise, those who have lost their character, and are notorious for their thefts and robberies, are not ashamed when they are found out, taken, or convicted.

"So is the house of Israel ashamed": Of their idolatry, or ought to be; or "shall be", as the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it. Though not now, yet hereafter, sooner or later.

"They, their kings, their princes, and their priests and their prophets": All being guilty. Kings setting ill examples, and the people following them; the priests being priests of Baal, and the prophets false ones.

The shame comes from the guilt they have. They thought they had not been noticed of God for their evil doings. Now that Jeremiah has spoken, they realize they have wandered far away from God. This sin is not limited to just one class of the people, but has spread from the poorest to the richest. Even the king and the priests and prophets had strayed from the Truth. The whole nation needs to repent and return to God.

**Jeremiah 2:27 "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."**

Images of "stone" or wood were often used in the idolatry of the ancient world. The wood may also refer to specific cultic practices associated with the debased Canaanite religion (compare 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 17:10; see the notes on Judges 3:6-7). For the condemnation of idolatry (see Psalms 115:4-8; 135:15-18; Isa. 44:6-20; see the notes on Judges 2:11-15).

This is almost like evolution. The word the stone was taken from is a feminine word indicating this stone was thought of as their mother.

"Stock": means tree, or part of a tree. It also means wood. This again, has to do with worshipping under the tree. Perhaps even worshipping idols made from the tree, instead of God the Father.

**Jeremiah 2:28 "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."**

This is or would be, the Lord's answer to them: what is become of your gods? Why do you not ask them for help in time of trouble? The gods that you have chosen for yourselves and worshipped; the gods, not that made you, but whom you yourselves have made.

"Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble": Call upon them to arise, those statues of wood and stone, those lifeless and senseless images. Let them rise off their seats, and move out of their places, if they can. And see whether they can save in a time of trouble and distress; for there is enough of them, if numbers will do.

"For according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah": In imitation of the Heathens, who had not only in every country, but in every city and town, a different god, the patron and patron deity of the place (2 Kings 17:29), the Septuagint and Arabic versions add, "according to the number of the ways or streets of Jerusalem", they sacrificed to Baal (see Jer. 11:13).

It seems they had begun to worship many gods. Some of them made from wood into idols. A piece of wood, no matter how beautifully carved, has no power to help anyone. God tells them to call on these idols to help them and see how far they get.

**Jeremiah 2:29 "Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD."**

Strive and contend, chide, murmur, and complain, when evil came upon them, as if the Lord dealt harshly with them, and as if they had never sinned against Him. When their case would not bear to be brought into judgment and examined openly; what would they get by that but shame and disgrace?

"Ye all have transgressed against me, saith the Lord": High and low, rich and poor, great and small; men of all ranks, degrees, and characters; kings, priests and prophets, therefore, ought not to contend with God, and charge Him with injustice or unkindness, but themselves with folly and wickedness.

It seems the only time they call on the LORD is when they are in trouble. He says here, if these false gods are so powerful, why are you calling on Me?

**Jeremiah 2:30 "In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion."**

"In vain": or, "for vanity"; for vain speaking, for making vain oaths and vows; so it is explained in the Talmud. But the sense is, that the rod of chastisement was used in vain. The afflictions that came upon them had no effect on them to amend or reform them; they were never the better for them.

"They received no correction": (or instruction by them; Jer. 5:3).

"Your own sword hath devoured your prophets": The prophets Isaiah, Zechariah, and Uriah, were sent to the Israelites to reprove and correct them. But the people were so far from receiving correction, that the Prophets were put to death. Though Kimchi mentions it as the sense of his father, and which he approves of, that this is to be understood, not of the true prophets of the Lord, but of false prophets. Wherefore it is said, "your prophets"; and they had no prophets but false prophets, whose prophecy was the cause of the destruction of souls. And this brought ruin upon the prophets themselves. And this sense of the words Jerom gives into; it follows:

"Like a destroying lion": That is, the sword of the Lord. The judgments of God, by which the people fall, and their false prophets with them, were like a lion that destroys and devours all that come near it. The Septuagint and Arabic versions add:

"And ye were not afraid": Which confirms what was said before, that chastisement and correction were in vain.

The smiting of the children by God was to cause them to repent. He says here, He smote them, but it did not change them as it should have. They did not learn from His correcting them. They had killed the prophets who God sent to teach them His ways. God had always purged His people to make them better. It was like cutting the vine back to make the new growth better. God loved Judah. He just wanted them to live the way He had intended them to live. He was deeply hurt by their idolatry. The only way He could get them to repent and call on Him, was when they were in dire need of His help.

Verses 31-37: God equates the idolatry of the people with blatant sexual immorality. The value of virginity and a "bride her attire" (2:32), which would not be easily forgotten, highlight the tragedy that God's "people have forgotten me".

**Jeremiah 2:31 "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?"**

"Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?": No, the Israelites were plentifully supplied by Him when in the wilderness, and since they were brought into a land flowing with milk and honey, they stood in need of nothing; they had a constant supply of all good things.

"A land of darkness?": Of misery, distress, and poverty; where no light of joy, comfort, or prosperity is. A land that never sees the light, or enjoys the benefit of the sun, and so is barren and unfruitful. "A land of thorns", as in the Septuagint version; or, "a desert and uncultivated land", as the Targum said, also Syriac and Arabic versions. It may be rendered, "a land of the darkness of God". That is, of the greatest darkness, of thick and gross darkness, alluding to that in Egypt; as the flame of God, and mountains of God (SOS 8:6), as Ben Melech and Kimchi observe.

"Wherefore say my people, we are lords": And can reign without thee; or we have kings and princes, and have no need of thee, says Kimchi. But the word used seems to have another meaning, and to require another sense. The Targum is, "we are removed"; and the Vulgate Latin version, "we have gone back"; to which agrees the Jewish Midrash, mentioned by Jarchi, and confirmed with a passage out of the Mishnah. "We are separated from thee; we have departed from thee, turned our backs on thee, have forsaken thee, and left thy ways and worship". And to do so was very ungrateful, when the Lord had so richly supplied them, that they had not lacked any good thing; and this sense agrees with what follows.

"We will come no more unto thee?": Some render it, "we have determined"; as having the same sense with the Arabic word, which signifies to "will" or "determine" anything. And then the meaning is, we are determined, we are resolved to come no more to Thee, to attend Thy worship and service anymore; and so the Targum explains, "we will not return any more to thy worship."

God had brought light and happiness and joy to His people. They had been supernaturally protected from their enemies. He had brought rain when the crops needed it, and gave abundant crops for their effort. He had been a blessing to them in every way. This rebellion was like the rebellion of Lucifer. They wanted to be their own god. They thought too highly of themselves. Instead of looking to God for their answers, they looked to themselves. They believed a lie, and began to worship false gods.

**Jeremiah 2:32 "Can a maid forget her ornaments, [or] a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number."**

Take notice of it, consider it; or hear it, as the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions explain. Jarchi and Kimchi think the pot of manna was brought out, and shown them, to be looked at by them, for the conviction of them, and confirmation of what follows.

"Can a maid forget her ornaments": which she has provided for her wedding day, and is then to wear, such as ear rings, bracelets, and jewels, which are never out of her mind. And can scarcely sleep for thinking of them, how richly she shall be adorned with them; wherefore it follows:

"Or a bride her attire?": Or, "her bindings"; her knots about her head or breast. The word is rendered "head bands" in (Isa. 3:20). And here by the Septuagint version, "her stomacher"; set with sparkling precious stones (see Isa. 61:10). These things her heart being set upon, and priding herself with, cannot be forgotten by her, at least not for long.

"Yet, my people have forgotten me days without number": Which shows great stupidity and ingratitude. The Lord not being so much to them, from whom they had received so many favors, as the ornaments of a maid, and the attire of a bride, are to them.

The bride's attire is her wedding dress. Her ornaments are the beautiful things the groom had given her. These are things a woman never forgets. God is better to His bride than any earthly groom. His gifts are for eternity, and the attire of the bride is white linen washed in the blood of the Lamb. This is the robe of righteousness, which puts us in right standing with God. To forget that, would be unthinkable.

**Jeremiah 2:33 "Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? Therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways."**

"Trimmet": is the same as that rendered "amend" (in Jer. 7:3, 5), and was probably often on the lips of those who made a show of reformation. Here it is used with a scornful irony, "What means this reform, this show of amendment of thy ways, which leads only to a further indulgence in adulterous love?"

"Hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways": Better, hast thou also taught thy ways wickedness? The professed change for the better was really for the worse.

There is even a bit of discipline required in the worship of false gods. They have conformed to that way, and now are leading others.

**Jeremiah 2:34 "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."**

Either of the innocent infants of poor persons, who were sacrificed to Moloch; or of the poor prophets of the Lord, whom they slew, because they faithfully reprov'd them for their sins. And the blood of those being found in their skirts is expressive of the publicness and notoriety of their sin, and also of the large quantity of bloodshed. Inasmuch as the skirts of their garments were filled with it, as if they had trod and walked in blood (see Isa. 63:3).

"I have not found it by secret search": Hebrew, by digging; as if the earth had covered the blood, or as if they had committed their wickedness in some obscure places.

“The poor innocents” are the true prophets who have been killed by these who have followed false gods. These innocents are martyrs. They have been slain by the sword, and their blood is evident on the skirts of their slayers. God did not have to look in secret places to find this. They had done this right out in the open, all the time proclaiming they were doing this for God.

**Jeremiah 2:35 "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."**

The people establish their guilt with their own words, protesting their innocence here while also stating that they cannot help chasing after other gods (2:23, 25).

Much wrong is done claiming to be doing God's will, when it is not God's will. They proclaimed innocence. They thought if they said they were innocent, it would fool God into believing they were innocent. This will not fool God at all. He knows their hearts.

**Jeremiah 2:36 "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria."**

Or, "by changing thy way"; sometimes going one way, and sometimes another. Sometimes to Egypt, and then to Assyria; seeking sometimes to the one for help, and sometimes to the other. At one time serving the gods of the one, in order to curry favor with them, and then the gods of the other. Like a lascivious woman that gads about from place to place to increase her lovers, and satisfy her lust. The Vulgate Latin version is, "how exceeding vile art thou become, changing thy ways". And so Jarchi says, the word signifies "contempt", or "vileness": deriving it from or to be "vile" or "contemptible"; and to this sense are the Septuagint and Arabic versions. But Kimchi derives it from to go; to which our version and others agree.

"Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt": As they were in the times of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, when Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt took the former, and put him in bands, and carried him into Egypt. And set the latter upon the throne, and took tribute of him, for which the land was taxed (2 Kings 23:33).

"As thou wast ashamed of Assyria": In the times of Ahaz, who sent to the king of Assyria for help, when Judah was smitten by the Edomites, and invaded by the Philistines. But when he came to him, he distressed him, and strengthened and helped him not (2 Chron. 28:16).

They had run to the world leaders for help, when they should have been going to God. All the running about to this country and that for help, will not stop this judgement of God on them.

**Jeremiah 2:37 "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."**

Some apply it to the sad and ineffectual return of the ambassadors, being disappointed in their expectation from the king of Egypt; but rather, all the help thou canst procure from abroad shall not prevent thy captivity, but from hence thou shalt go.

"Thine hands upon thine head": A usual posture of sadness and mourning (2 Sam. 13:19), suited here to her going into captivity.

"Rejected thy confidences": Refused to give success unto them (2 Chron. 16:7). Or, rejected thee for thy confidences; or, He disapproves thy confidences, viz. all thy refuges which thou seekest out of God.

"Thou shalt not prosper in them": Viz. (meaning in other words), in thy refuges and dependencies.

To have confidence in the world, or in themselves, would bring nothing but headaches. God does not count their confidence in the world, or in themselves, as faith. We need to learn from this. The world has no power. We have no power within ourselves. The only power available to us is the power of God. When we put our trust and faith in God, then we will prosper because He blesses us.

### **Jeremiah Chapter 2 Continued Questions**

1. In verse 19, what shall correct them?
2. What is verse 19 really saying?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the beginning of wisdom.
4. God broke the yoke of the \_\_\_\_\_, when He carried them to the Promised Land.
5. What was their unfaithfulness to God?
6. What is the "noble Vine" in verse 21?
7. Who is many times, spoken of as God's vineyard?
8. Where do we read that God had forbidden cross breeding?
9. What would the degenerate plant be like?
10. God is not interested in the \_\_\_\_\_ cleanliness of man.
11. The clean \_\_\_\_\_ is what is pleasing to God.
12. Who did Jesus call "whited sepulchers"?
13. What should we be washed in?
14. What were they saying in verse 23 that was just not enough?

15. We must not become \_\_\_\_\_ in our worship.
16. What is Christianity?
17. What is verse 24 speaking of?
18. What false religion was the "foot being unshod" speaking of?
19. What is the "shame" mentioned in verse 26?
20. Who has sinned?
21. What had they said to the stock?
22. What does "stock" in verse 27 mean?
23. What does God tell them to do with the idols of wood?
24. What good had it done to smite them?
25. What had God brought to these Israelites that should have caused them to worship Him?
26. What is the bride's attire?
27. How does God's gift differ from the earthly groom's?
28. What is verse 33 speaking of?
29. Who are the poor innocents of verse 34?
30. What did they say they were in verse 35?
31. Who had they run to for help in verse 36?
32. To have confidence in the world, or in themselves, would bring nothing but \_\_\_\_\_.