

# (Through the Bible) Jeremiah 1-2

by Chuck Smith

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*Chuck Smith's sermon on Jeremiah 1-2 explores the prophet's calling, the spiritual state of Israel, and God's unwavering faithfulness amidst impending judgment.*

**Duration:** 1:07:42

**Topics:** "Idolatry", "Faithfulness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by emphasizing the importance of remembering one's first love for God. He compares this to the message given to the church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation, where they were rebuked for leaving their first love. The preacher then highlights the idolatry and forsaking of God that the people of Jerusalem have engaged in. He reminds them that God is the fountain of living water and that they have turned away from Him. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's faithfulness in leading the people through difficult times and providing for them in a plentiful land.

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## Transcript

At this time, shall we turn in our Bibles to the book of Jeremiah. About 60 years after Isaiah died, God called Jeremiah to what I feel must have been the hardest task any minister has ever been called upon to perform for the Lord. Jeremiah had to oversee the death of the nation.

He had to watch it as it was in its final death throes, as it went into convulsions and died and was carried away captive to Babylon. His ministry was destined from the beginning for failure. That is, the people were not going to hearken, the people were not going to change.

They had set their course and their destiny was determined. And yet, because God is so faithful, God continued His witness to them until they were carried away captive to Babylon. And He didn't really stop then.

He had Daniel and Ezekiel there in Babylon continuing to witness to them even after their captivity. But Jeremiah's ministry wasn't to be successful as far as really bringing these people back to a spiritual relationship with God. They were on the way downhill, there was no recovery at this point.

And he had to sadly watch these people as they disregarded his warnings and as they went on into captivity. So the book of Jeremiah begins with the words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests that were at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. Now you will find that there is another priest, Hilkiyah, who was

the high priest that is not the father of Jeremiah.

Though Jeremiah was a priest, the fact that he was from Anathoth indicates that he was of the Kohathites. And the Kohathites had been removed, that particular branch of the Levites had been removed from the high priesthood. And so this Hilkiah, the father of Jeremiah, was not synonymous with the Hilkiah, the high priest.

To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. Now Josiah was basically a good king. He was eight years old when he began to reign.

So naturally, being just a child, eight years old, he was just a puppet for the beginning of his reign upon the throne. As other men had good influences upon Josiah, and he instituted spiritual reforms in the beginning of the fifth year of his reign. And by the time the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, the spiritual reforms of Josiah had been pretty effective in that they had gotten rid of most of the altars unto Baal and the groves and the high places where they had worshipped the false gods.

Where the people of Israel had worshipped these false gods, and yet it was still in their hearts. Though that outwardly there was a spiritual reform, inwardly they had not turned with all their hearts to God. So it was a time of outward spiritual revival because the king was a godly king.

But as soon as Josiah died, the nation lapsed right back into its idolatry, which indicates that it wasn't really a move towards God from their hearts, but only a surface thing in seeking to please the king. They went along with the spiritual reforms. So because it was only surface and not down in the heart of the nation, even during the reign of Josiah, Jeremiah cried out against the things that were going on.

During the reign of Josiah, they reinstated the worship in the temple, but God said, go down to the temple and cry to the people as they go in. Trust not in lying vanity, saying the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. God said, I've forsaken them.

And so while Josiah was king though, Jeremiah did not face really persecution. But once Josiah died and Jehoiakim came onto the throne, then Jehoiakim began to persecute Jeremiah. There were several endeavors to kill him.

He was placed in the dungeon and the same was true through the reign of Zedekiah. Jeremiah spent most of the time in prison. And so he lists these three kings.

It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the 11th year of Zedekiah, who was the last of the kings. The son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. Now, there were two other kings who reigned during this same period.

But their reigns were both of them short-lived. Jehoiahaz and Jehoiachin both had a three-month reign during this same period that Jeremiah was prophesying. But because they reigned for such a short period, Jeremiah does not list them as the kings that were reigning.

And it could be that the Lord didn't speak to Jeremiah during those particular periods that Jehoiahaz and Jehoiachin were reigning. So, the three major kings. Actually, Josiah reigned for 31 years.

And then Jehoiakim reigned for 11 years. And Zedekiah reigned for 11 years until he was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. His eyes were put out and he was carried away to captivity in Babylon.

Now, Jeremiah continued to live there. Nebuchadnezzar gave Jeremiah the choice of staying there or coming to Babylon. Because Jeremiah was actually accused of treason during a part of his prophesying because he was telling the people, look, surrender to the Babylonians.

They're going to take you. And so, it's better to surrender than to be devastated. And so, he was accused of treason and imprisoned as a result of it.

They thought that he was in conspiracy with the Babylonians. But Nebuchadnezzar, in honoring Jeremiah because of his true prophecies, offered him to come and to have a place there in Babylon. But being the true patriot that he was, he chose to remain there in Jerusalem under the vassal reign of Gedaliah until he was put to death by those evil men.

And then he was more or less kidnapped and taken to Egypt. He still wanted to stay, but the people were afraid that as a result of their rebellion against the vassal king that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, Gedaliah, that Nebuchadnezzar was going to come and really destroy them. And so, they fled to Egypt and they took Jeremiah with them.

And at this point, there are legends and rumors and stories of what happened to Jeremiah. One very common of the rumors is that Jeremiah took the Ark of the Covenant and hid it. And there are some references in some of the books of the Apographa to the place where Jeremiah hid the Ark of the Covenant.

Other stories are that he took one of the young princes and ferreted him off to Egypt. And then according to some of the legends that are especially promulgated by the people who are called British Israelites, those who seek to identify the Anglo-Saxon races with the tribes of Israel, they say that Jeremiah spirited the prince to England where he became the king. And that the present Queen of England and Prince Charles are direct descendants of the Davidic line.

So, God has kept his promise that from the seat of David there would not lack being one on the throne. And so, that is the only place where there is still a monarchy and they are direct descendants. And they go into a long rigmarole of trying to prove their point of this ethnic relationship between the Anglo-Saxon races and the British and Scottish and Danish and so forth.

They say Dane, you see, that's Dan, Dan-ish. And the word ish in Hebrew is man, so it's Dan's man. The tribe of Dan, the Danish are the tribe of Dan.

The British, you see the ish on the end, proves that they are the lost tribes of Israel. They seem to ignore foolish, but that there is not, surely not enough solid evidence to prove their claims. It has to be stated that the claims are based much more upon fantasy and hopefulness than on actual reality from historical records.

But those are just part of the stories that surround Jeremiah. It is thought that actually he was put to death finally there on one of the banks of the Nile, one of the tributaries to the Nile River. But the Bible is silent, so we must be, it's only guesswork after the Bible ceases its record.

Verse 4, Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee. And before you came forth out of the womb, I set thee apart, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Now, there is a lot of question today as to when life begins as we deal with this area of abortion.

But I think that it is significant that God declares to Jeremiah, Before the fetus was ever formed, I knew you. Before you ever came forth out of the womb, I had already set you apart. God's purposes for our lives were not established after we were born.

God's purposes for our lives have been established from the beginning, from the beginning of time. What God said to Jeremiah, He could very well say to each one of you, Before you were ever in a fetal state, I knew you. Before you ever came forth out of the womb, I had set you apart for the purpose and the plan that I have for your lives.

The thing is, for me to discover and to come into harmony with that plan that God has for me. That's the important thing for me. My destiny has already been determined.

The Bible says, We are His workmanship, created together in Christ Jesus unto the good works that God has before ordained that we should walk in them. God has already before ordained that which He has planned for your life. Now in the meantime, He is working in your life to prepare you for those works.

Thus, we are His workmanship. God is working in us tonight. Paul the Apostle speaks about having been separated from his mother's womb.

God's hand was on my life from the beginning. The recognition of that. And I'm certain that each of us can look back and we can see how God's hand has been upon our life from the beginning.

And the experiences and all that we've gone through as God is preparing us for His work. So, God speaks to Jeremiah and speaks about his prenatal state. Then said I, that is, Jeremiah responded to God, Oh, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, I am but a child.

Now, as you figure the years that Jeremiah prophesied, and the fact that he was still alive after the captivity and went to Egypt and all, Jeremiah was probably somewhere between 17 and 25 years old when the call of God came to him. And that's where the estimates usually range, between 17 and 25. Now, can you imagine a 17-year-old boy and God saying, I knew you before you were ever in a fetal state.

And I set you apart. You're to go talk to President Reagan. And you're to tell him, thus saith the Lord.

I'm sure that you'd have the same problem that Jeremiah had. Who am I, Lord? I'm just a young man. And that's what the Hebrew word is there.

I'm just a young man. Usually indicated a teenager. But the Lord said unto me, say not I'm a young man.

For you shall go to all that I send you. And whatsoever I command you, you shall speak. So often it seems that when God called a person for a particular service, they were aware of their inabilities to fulfill that service for God.

God called Moses. Oh God, I can't speak. I haven't been able to speak.

And I can't even speak now. So many times people are trying to excuse themselves because of the recognition of their own abilities. But in reality, God isn't looking for talented, abled people.

He's just looking for willing people. That we would not go forth in our abilities, in our genius, but we would trust in the Lord and go forth in the power of the Spirit. So God said, don't say.

Now don't say that. Don't say you can't do it. Don't say you're but a child.

Gideon said, oh Lord, you can't mean me. My father is a nobody and I'm the least in my father's family. You can't mean me.

Saul, when Samuel said, God has called you to be the king over Israel. Oh no, no. Made a mistake here somewhere.

And many times when God lays upon our hearts, the things that he has in mind, we say, Lord, there's a mistake here somewhere. The angel's got the wrong address. He's delivering the message to the wrong person, Lord.

That's not me. But the very consciousness of our ability is the very thing that qualifies us for that which God wants to do. Because God said, not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.

So it isn't my ability that God is really seeking for. It's just a channel, an instrument through which he can do his work. And if I feel like I can't do it, then that makes me a more yielded vessel unto God.

If I feel, alright Lord, you bet, just been waiting for you, you know, I'll do it right away. Then it takes a while before God beats me down to nothing, so then he can go ahead and do what he's been wanting to do through me. In every service to which God calls us, there is that feeling of I'm ill-equipped.

Oh Lord, who am I? Now God said, don't be afraid of their faces. Here's a young fellow going out and saying these things that are going to get people mad, and they're going to start glaring at him and gritting their teeth and scowling and making all kinds of fierce faces at him because he's saying things they don't like. So God said, don't be afraid of their faces.

For I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. So God's personal message of comfort to the prophet. Now don't be afraid, the way they look at you, because I am with you to deliver you.

Then the Lord put forth his hand and he touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have set thee this day over the nations.

Now imagine God saying this to just a young fellow, 17, 18 years old. Today, now look, I've touched you and I've set you over the nations. Me? And over the kingdoms.

And this was his ministry. To root out, to pull down, and to destroy. Oh, what a ministry.

Years ago when I was just a child and started in the ministry, our second pastorate was in Tucson, Arizona. And I have not always been the most tactful person in the world, nor am I yet. I'm not quite as blunt as Romaine, but I'm still not always graceful and tactful.

And I do have the capacity of just speaking what I feel to be the truth. And I think that it's important that the truth be spoken even though it does cut or hurt. I've always believed in the proverb, faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

And so, when we were pastoring in Tucson, in the first part of our pastoring there, we did a very excellent job in sort of emptying the church. And I received my first, not the last, but my first anonymous letter. I get them all the time now, but I received my first anonymous letter.

I read the first, I don't read them anymore. But it said, when Jesus was a boy and was a carpenter in his father's shop, we never read of him using a wrecking bar. And they spelled it R-E-C-K-I-N-G.

And I think that the intimation was that I was wrecking the church or something. But it was, it seems that God called me as he did Jeremiah to root out, to pull down and to destroy. You see, often times the system becomes so corrupt that there's nothing to build on.

Now, God's purpose is always that of building, but he cannot always start out building. Many times he has to tear down what is there. Now, in a lot of this redevelopment, downtown stuff, they have to go in with bulldozers and just level the buildings.

Tear them out and haul them away. And then they start the new building projects and the high rises and so forth. Because the stuff is so old, it's so decrepit, it's so corrupt that you wouldn't dare try to build on it.

The nation Israel had come to the place where it was beyond recovery. It was necessary now that God just pull down, root out, tear out what was left in order that he might start his new work of planting and of building. So, Jeremiah's ministry was first of all to root out, pull down, destroy and to throw down and then to build and to plant as God starts then his new work.

God never tears down in our lives except to the end that he might begin his true work of building up and planting that new work in us. So, you may be in that stage right now where God is still rooting out and you say, Oh Lord, you know, you're bringing me to nothing. Yes, that's what he wants to do.

In order that he might start his building and his planting in your life. So, that ministry to which God called Jeremiah is a very common type calling as God must get rid of the present corrupt system in order that he might establish his new work. That is why I feel that very rarely do you ever see real revival come within the framework of a denomination.

That God seems to always go outside and start a new work. He doesn't try to bring recovery to the old systems. He doesn't try to pour the new wine in the old skins.

He doesn't sew the new piece of cloth on the old garment. But he usually goes outside and starts a whole new building process. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Jeremiah, what do you see? And he said, I see a rod of an awakening tree.

Now, the almond tree in Hebrew is an awakening tree. Because the almond tree is the first tree that awakes in the spring. In fact, the almond trees begin to blossom in January.

They're the first trees to come out of the winter season there in the Holy Land. They start to blossom in January and by March they have their almonds and all on them. So, it's called an awakening tree because it's the first tree to awaken after the winter season.

Then the Lord said unto me, you've seen correctly. For I will watch over or awake over my word to perform it. What do you see? I see an awakening tree.

That's right. You've seen good. Because I'm going to be awake over my word to perform it.

I'm going to watch over my word to perform it. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time saying, what do you see? And I said, I see a boiling pot. And the face of it is towards the north.

Then the Lord said unto me, out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. Now, Babylon was actually east. But in order to attack, they had to come to the north and come down from the north rather than coming across the desert area there.

And so it is a reference to Babylon and the coming invasion. For lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord, and they shall come and they shall set everyone his throne at the entering in of the gates of Jerusalem and against all the walls thereof round about and against the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them, touching all their wickedness who have forsaken me and have burned incense unto other gods and worship the works of their own hands.

So, God is going to bring judgment upon his people because of their wickedness. Because they have forsaken God and they have turned to other gods and are burning incense to these other gods and worshiping these little idols that they have made with their own hands. Now, some of the latest archaeological diggings in the city of Jerusalem are in the area of the old city of David, Ophel, that is down below the Temple Mount area.

The city of David was actually down below that Temple Mount area. The Temple was put up there on Mount Moriah by David's son Solomon, but that was sort of the outskirts of the city in a westerly direction. And the city of David is on that hill of Ophel, coming up from the Pool of Siloam and the Gihon Springs.

That mound that comes up was the original city of Jerusalem and the city of David. And they are now doing quite a bit of archaeological diggings on the side of the hill there and they are uncovering houses that date back to the time of Jeremiah. The little houses that they are uncovering were broken down by Nebuchadnezzar during the time that Jeremiah was alive.

So the archaeologist's spade is going right back to the time of Jeremiah. And as they are pulling the rubble and the rocks off of these dwelling places, for when they came back from the Babylonian captivity, rather than rebuilding the houses, they just covered them over with dirt and built on top of them. And so they've dug down and they found these houses, but the interesting thing in the rubble of the houses there, they are discovering multitudes of little idols that the people had made and were worshipping.

A confirmation to the word of the Lord here to Jeremiah, where he said they've worshipped the works of their own hands. In each one of the houses, multitudes of these little idols. They are getting a collection of little idols like you can't believe.

So God says, My judgment is coming. Therefore, gird up thy loins. Now, the guys wore these long skirts and they're alright for walking around.

But if you're going to go to work, you've got to pull the things up and tie your sash so that your legs have free movement. If you're going to run, you've got to gird up your loins. You gird up the skirts, you pull them on up, tie your sash so that you can really get to work.

You can't work with that long robe down to the ground. So that term, gird up your loins, is always in reference to pulling up the long skirt that the men wore and tying the sash around to hold the thing up so that you can get to work. So it's sort of a phrase that says, now get to work.

Get busy. And arise, speak unto them all that I command you. Don't be dismayed at their faces.

Now, the second time the Lord said that, because they're going to be looking at you with some real angry looks. Lest I confound thee before them. Now, it's an interesting thing.

A lot of times it's best when you've got a message you've got not even to look at the people, if it's a harsh message, because their faces might, you know, you lose your thought and you get confounded because, you know, you're reacting to the response of the people to the message. So He said, don't look at your faces, lest you get confounded. Just go out and speak the word that I put in your mouth.

And it's going to have a negative effect upon them, so just don't look at their faces. Lest I confound you before them. For behold, I have made thee this day a defense city, an iron pillar, a brass wall against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes, against the priests, and against the people.

Man, you're going to stand against them all, Jeremiah. You're going to be standing against the kings, the priests, the princes, and all the people. You're going to be almost alone in this thing.

But I've made you a defense city, I'm going to defend you, I'm going to put a wall around you. And they shall fight against thee, but they will not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver you. Now, here is His commission, here is His calling, and it is interesting to me that in His calling, God doesn't lay out a nice rosy picture.

Jeremiah, I'm going to call you now to a wonderful job, and, you know, you're going to minister for me, and because you're a minister, I want you to drive a Cadillac and live on Lido Island and enjoy the best now, because after all, you know, you're my child and you deserve the best. No, God laid out the truth of what's going to happen to you, Jeremiah. It's not going to be easy.

You better not look at their faces, it'll scare you. I've set you against the king, the princes, the priests, the people, the whole cabal, you're going to be there by yourself, and they're going to turn against you. But don't worry, I'm going to be with you, and I'm going to deliver you.

When the Lord called Paul the Apostle on the road to Damascus, and brought that dramatic change in his life, as Paul was there and the Lord was saying to Paul, now, Paul, I'm calling you to go to the Gentiles, and the Lord laid out for Paul the whole ministry that he had for him. When Paul came to the city of Damascus still blind, and of course, I'm certain in his mind, total mental confusion. Here he was on the road to Damascus, breathing out threats against this new sect of Christianity.

Actually, the word is breathing out murders against them. He was so uptight against this sect that would dare to declare that Jesus was the Messiah, and to go against the teaching of the Pharisees, and breathing out murders against them with papers to imprison those that called upon the name of the Lord there in Damascus. There on the road, a life-changing experience, as he's lying on the ground and someone is saying to him, why are you kicking against the pricks? Who are you, Lord, that I might serve you? I'm Jesus, whom you persecute.

What would you have me to do, Lord? And the Lord told him what he had him to do. For when Paul was in Damascus, and still going over these things in his mind, after three days, the Lord spoke to a man by the name of Ananias, and he said, Ananias, go over and lay your hands upon Paul, or Saul, that he might receive his sight. And he said, oh, Lord, you're kidding, aren't you? I'm on his hit list.

I've heard about this guy. Oh, he's been just wrecking havoc in the church in Jerusalem. This guy's fierce.

The Lord said, no, don't worry. You go and do what I told you to do. For he is a chosen vessel unto me, and I have shown him all of the things that he's going to have to suffer for my sake.

The Lord said, Paul, here's what I want you to do. I want you to go to the Gentiles, but it's not going to be easy. You're going to be stoned.

They're going to drag you out of the city thinking you're dead. They're going to whip you. They're going to be beating you.

But I want you to go for me. Paul said, all right, let's go for it. But I think that that's very commendable on Paul's part that even having heard all the things he was going to suffer, he still made that commitment.

Now, sometimes ministers like to lay out a rosy path for you. Just receive Jesus, and life is going to be so beautiful. You'll have no more problems because it's just a nice bed of roses.

And just get on the air mattress and float into heaven, you know. No way. And Jesus didn't say that.

He said, look, if they didn't receive me, they're not going to receive you. If they persecuted me, they're going to persecute you because the servant isn't greater than his Lord. Take up your cross and follow me.

He didn't paint a rosy picture. He told them the truth, and I think it's important that we tell people the truth. It isn't easy to follow the Lord.

It isn't easy to serve the Lord. You're going to be going against the tide. But as the Lord said to Jeremiah, I will put a wall around you.

I will be your defense. And you will have experiences with God that will be invaluable as you see God's hand upon you and God's defense around you and the work of God. It's beautiful.

Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord. Now this is the first message that he has to deliver. As God is calling to His people, and it's really a very pathetic thing.

It's filled with pathos. As God is calling the people, much as Jesus did in His message to the church of Ephesus. Oh, you've got your works.

You've got your organizations. You've got your committees. You know, you're functioning.

But oh, I've got this against you. You've left your first love. Now remember from whence you have fallen.

And God is actually calling the people to the very same thing, to remember the first love that they had for God. God said, I can remember that first love that you had. That excitement that you had in Me.

Where all you could think about all day long was Me. You were singing the praises unto Me. Your life was just filled with joy and ecstasy as you were walking with Me.

You were writing little notes to Me. You were singing praises unto Me. You were making up love songs to Me.

I remember those days, God said. The days of your first love. And God is recalling it to Jerusalem.

Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee and the kindness of thy youth. The love of that engagement when you went after Me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown. When you were willing to follow Me wherever I would lead you.

When you were so dedicated and committed that nothing was held back as far as your commitment. Where do you want Me to go, Lord? What do you want Me to do? Lord, I'm for it. Let's go.

God said, I remember those days when you were so devoted, so committed. The love that you had for Me then. Israel was holiness unto the Lord.

And the first fruits of His increase. And all that devour Him shall offend. Evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.

Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob. All the families of the house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity did you find or did your fathers find in Me that they have gone far from Me and walked after emptiness and become empty? What have I done? What did I do? And the messages are perennial.

There's always a certain group to whom the message still applies. And I feel that God is speaking to many of you tonight, even as He spoke to Israel. Even as Jesus spoke to the church of Ephesus.

He said, hey, what did I do that you would turn away from Me? I remember the love, the devotion, the commitment that you used to have. What did I do? How did I offend you? Where did you get turned off? How is it that you've turned your heart away from Me? How is it that you don't have that same devotion and dedication anymore? What iniquities did your fathers find in Me that they would turn and follow after these emptinesses until they themselves became empty? They no longer say, where is the Lord that brought us up out of Egypt? That led us through the wilderness, through the land of the deserts and the pits, through a land of drought and the shadow of death, through the land that no man passed through and where no man lived. And I brought you into a plentiful country to eat the fruit of it and the goodness thereof.

But when you entered, you defiled My land and you made My heritage an abomination. The priests weren't saying, where is the Lord? And they that handle the law did not know Me. The pastors also transgressed against Me and the prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after the things that do not profit.

Now, of course, when the priests, the pastors become corrupted, then what can you expect? There are so many men today who are so completely liberal in their theology that they no longer really rank as Christians. But still, they occupy pulpits and preach their messages to the attended throngs on Sunday morning. But it is no longer the Gospel that they preach.

It is no longer the power of Jesus Christ to save a man from sin. And the blood of Jesus Christ that redeemed us from our lost estate. But they are flowery speeches of it's nice to be nice.

So go out and be nice this week. And just platitudes. Think right.

You are what you think. You become what you think. And so correct your thinking.

The whole problem of the world is the way men are thinking. Get rid of your negative thoughts. Only think in positive terms and all.

And there is no more a preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this is tragic. The same condition that God was crying about in Israel.

John Hilton, I was with him this week back in Maryland, Middletown, Maryland. And John met the pastor in Middletown of the United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ. Now you that know John can appreciate it.

John was in his cut-offs. He introduced himself as the new pastor of Calvary Chapel there in Middletown. And he thought, you know, well this fellow is the pastor of the United Church of Christ.

He said, well, you know, it's great to meet you. I imagine you've been a pastor there for 35 years. He said, I imagine it's a real thrill to share Jesus Christ with people for 35 years.

He said, I was just trying to make conversation. And this guy turned on him and said, young man, you don't know a thing about the Gospel. Talking about Jesus Christ.

Just started berating, yelling at John, getting livid with him. And John said, I didn't know what I said, you know. I just tried to talk to the man about, you know, the joy of the Lord and loving Jesus.

Well, what can you expect from the people that are sitting under that man's ministry week after week? Of a real devotion to God or a love for God or a commitment of their lives to Him. It's all programmed. It's all a formal relationship with God.

So God speaks out against them. The priest who handled the law, they don't even know me. The pastors have transgressed against me.

The prophets are prophesying by bell. Wherefore, I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. Even so, I'm still going to plead with you, God said.

For Passover, the isles of Cyprus. In other words, go to the west. And Cyprus was considered the door to the whole western part of the world.

Chittim, Cyprus. And send them to Kedar. Now Kedar was the gateway to the east.

So go to the west, go to the east and consider diligently and see if such a thing has ever happened before. Such a thing exists. Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? People don't do that.

Their whole religious system is so deeply involved in their cultural aspects that people just don't change their gods, even those that worship false gods. But God said, but my people have changed their glory. That is their fellowship with me for that which does not profit.

Be astonished, oh ye heavens. The angels looking down with astonishment. And I'm sure that they do that on us many times.

The angels on church are just shocked when they see us starting to do something. Oh no, look at that. Watch that now, you know.

And they see us in our stupid moves. I'm sure they decide, oh no, I can't look. And they know the disaster that we're going to fall into, you know, because of our own follies.

Be astonished, oh ye heavens, at this. And be horribly afraid. Be very desolate, saith the Lord.

For my people have committed two evils. First, they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water. So many times, water is used as a symbol of life because water is so essential for life.

And the Lord so often takes it from the physical on into the spiritual. And He said, I am the water of life. If any man drinks of Me, he will never thirst again.

Jesus cried to the assembled multitude at the Feast of Tabernacles, If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. And he that drinks of the water that I give out of his belly, there will flow rivers of living water. And the last chapter of the Bible, the last invitation in the Bible, And he that is a thirst, let him come and drink of the water of life freely.

The last invitation to the Gospel. For thirsty man to come and to drink of the water of life freely. Now God said, they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, the source, the spring from which life comes.

And instead, they have hewed out cisterns. Now that land being an arid land and not really receiving that much rain, it is necessary over there that they set up exotic type of water systems. The Essenes were able to exist in the very dry, barren area down near the Dead Sea where you get maybe an inch of water a year, an inch and a half, two inches at the most a year.

But the way they were able to survive down there was by building these great cisterns. And then when it would rain up in the highlands and these washes and gullies would become full of water, they had their dams and they diverted the flow of the water on into these cisterns that they had carved out of this limestone. If you go to Masada, you'll find that all the way around the side of the hill there on Masada are these huge cisterns that they've carved out, as well as the cisterns up on the top of Masada.

These huge caverns that have been carved out of the sandstone. And again they had a dam in the river and you can see the little ledges that they've carved where they would bring the water along the ledges and dump into these cisterns. And thus they would gather just the sparsest amount of rain, but they would gather the water that would run off and they would preserve it in these cisterns.

But cisterns were not a source of water except that they were a reservoir. In other words, they weren't springs. They had no source within them.

They had to gather the runoff water. And so at best, a cistern could hold only water that would get stagnant. And God said, Marvel ye heavens! Be astonished! Look at that! They have forsaken Me, the spring, the fountain of living water, in order that they might hew out these cisterns.

But then He said, they are broken cisterns. They can't hold water. Now carrying it over to the spiritual aspects of it, man basically, instinctively is religious.

He's got to believe in something. And when men forsake God, they establish a system of thought, a philosophy, concepts, or whatever, that they commit themselves to. They become devoted to and they have to believe in it.

And it requires faith. A creed to be believed, a standard of life, a philosophy of life, or whatever. So men create their own philosophies, their own rationales for life, their own cisterns.

But the thing is, all of these systems, they can't hold water. They leave you thirsty. They will not satisfy you.

The end result is emptiness. Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Why is he spoiled? The young lions roared upon him and yelled, and they made his land waste. His cities are burned without inhabitants.

Also the children of Noth and Tehippenes, actually cities of Egypt, have broken the crown of thy head. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself? Haven't you brought all of this upon yourself, God said, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God? Looking at the calamities that have happened, we bring them upon ourselves. If we had only been serving the Lord, these things wouldn't have happened.

Why does it take calamity many times to wake us up? And now, what have you to do with the way of Egypt? They were, of course, looking to an alliance with Egypt to save them from the Babylonians and an alliance with Assyria, but Assyria was soon to fall to the Babylonians. So an alliance with Syria wasn't going to be any good. Egypt itself would be taken.

Thine own wickedness shall correct thee and thy backsliding shall reprove thee. Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that you have forsaken the Lord thy God and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. For of all time I have broken thy yoke and burst thy bands, and thou saidest, I will not transgress when upon every high hill and under every green tree you are wandering, playing the harlot.

So the high hills were the places of worship. Under the groves that they planted, the green trees, again the places of worship as they had turned from God and were committing spiritual adultery or playing the harlot in a spiritual sense. Yet when I created, when I planted you, I planted you a noble vine.

It was good seed, Abraham. How then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? Again, the figure as Isaiah so graphically illustrates in the fifth chapter of the vine that became wild. For though thou wash thee with niter, now that isn't the saltpeter that we know today, potassium nitrate, but it is a residue that is on the bottom of the lakes when the lakes dry up that they would boil and use in making soap and use it for cleaning.

And take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God. You may try to wash yourself outwardly, but it's an inward problem. How can you say I'm not polluted? I've not gone after Balaam.

See thy way in the valley. Know what you have done, for you are as a swift camel traversing her ways. You're like a wild donkey that is used to the wilderness that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure.

Now, this figure of the wild donkey that God uses is interesting. It's a wild donkey that is in heat. A female donkey in heat.

And she's sniffing the wind trying to find out where the male donkeys are in order that she might go. And she doesn't care what the male donkey is. She just wants a male donkey.

And God uses this as a figure here of Israel who is just turned away from God and just will take anything, will worship anything. It's so susceptible to worship anything. Like the wild donkey snuffing the wind at her pleasure.

And in her occasion, that is during the time of her season, who can take her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves. In her heat, they will find her. Withhold thy foot from being unchod.

In other words, you're running after these things until you wear your feet out. And thy throat from thirst, but you have said, there is no hope, no. For I have loved strangers and after them will I go.

As a thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed. They, their kings, their princes and priests and their prophets, saying to the stock, that is to a piece of wood that they've carved into an idol, you are my father. Or to the stone that they've carved out a little figure, you are the one that created me.

You 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, O God, and save us.

But where are your gods that you have made? Let them arise if they can save you in the time of trouble. For according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah. So each city had its own local pagan deity.

And as many cities as they had, they had gods. And the tragic thing was that God said, Hey, look, you've turned away from me, you've turned to these other gods, but in trouble, you'll be calling. When your calamity comes, you'll be saying, Arise, God, save us.

He said, But don't bother calling. Go ahead and call unto these gods that you have been worshiping, you've been serving. It is a tragic thing when God turns a deaf ear to man.

When God said to Jeremiah, Ephraim is given over to her idols, let her alone. Don't pray anymore for their good, for if you do, I'm not going to listen. That's a sad day.

When God turns a deaf ear to man. And God said, That day is coming. If you persist in following after strange flesh, strange gods, and the worship of these strange gods, there will come a day of trouble, and you will call upon God.

But he said, I won't hear. I won't answer. Many will come in that day, Jesus said, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us.

You'll say, Nope. I never knew you. Those are heavy words that we need to consider seriously.

Wherefore will you plead with me? You've all transgressed against me. Why are you going to plead? You've been transgressing against me. In vain have I smitten your children.

They received no correction. Your own sword hath devoured your prophets like a destroying lion. God said, I've dealt with you in vain.

Your children are so stubborn and rebellious. And with your own sword, you've killed my prophets that I sent to you. O generation, see the word of the Lord.

Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? A land of darkness? Why do my people say, We are lords. We will come no more unto thee. Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her gown? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

Now one thing we've never had, and that is a bride that forgot her gown for her wedding. You just don't forget some things. And yet God said, You've forgotten me so many days that you can't number them.

Why do you trim your way to seek love? Therefore, you've taught the wicked ones your ways. Also in your skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents. I have not found it by secret search, but upon all of these.

You know, you're open with it. Yet you say, Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee because you say I have not sinned.

You say, well, it's not wrong. It doesn't matter. God doesn't care.

It's not really sin. And God speaks out against that. He said, Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt as you were ashamed of Assyria.

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. No wonder God said to Jeremiah, Now don't look at their faces. Don't be afraid of their faces.

Boy, he had a heavy, heavy message to lay on these people. I mean, he was really laying it on them and not sparing.

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