**BCM Bible Study – August 31/September 1, 2022**

**Israel’s covenant adultery & call to repentance [Jer 2 - 6]**

Background:

*Judah (the southern kingdom) has strayed from God for years. They are currently caught in* ***idol worship*** *at the time of Jeremiah’s prophecies, specifically worshipping the Canaanite storm god, “Baal”. Jeremiah has accepted the call as a prophet to Judah, and is tasked with going to the people of God on God’s behalf.*

“The thrust and tenor of these prophetic oracles are common to the book of Jeremiah. They possess two characteristics that define their particular role in the book: their placement at the beginning of Jeremiah’s words to his audience and their profile as corporate address to the people as a whole.” - Dearman

* **Read Jeremiah 2:1-13**
  + How is the relationship between Israel and God described in v. 1-3? What does this show you about God’s feelings toward Israel?
  + Verse 2 is referencing the time when the Israelites were wandering in the desert for forty years after being led out of Egypt. What do you think changed for the Israelites once they reached the promised land? [Exodus 19:1-2, Deut 2:7, Deut 8:2-3] Why do you think it was easier for the Israelites to follow God in the wilderness, but not in the promised land?
    - What does this tell you about human nature itself?
  + How might the question found in verse 6 have helped the Israelites to more faithfully follow the Lord?
  + Why is it so important for the Israelites to remind themselves of how God has delivered them in the past?
    - Are there any moments where God has delivered you that you remind yourself of? What are they?
  + What imagery does Jeremiah use to describe the adulterous actions of Israel in v. 13?
    - Palestine has three sources of water: the best is fresh running water, such as flows from a spring or stream called “living water”, next comes groundwater, such as might collect in a well; and last is runoff water collected in a cistern (a pit hewn into the limestone and plastered to prevent seepage but also tends to collect silt and mosquito larvae).
      * How does this information enhance/clarify the metaphor for you?

It’s easy to dismiss the Israelites behavior as ridiculous because they’re worshipping idols instead of the living God, yet we do similar things today. What are some “baals” that we turn to?

* **Read Jeremiah 3:11-15, Jeremiah 3:22a, Jeremiah 4:1a**
  + What is the common theme of these passages?
  + In 3:11-13, what is God’s one requirement for returning to Him?
    - How does God’s declaration in 3:14-15 redeem what was said earlier in 2:1-3?
    - “It is a profound theological claim that God’s ability to restore is not limited by human inability to heal broken relationships.” (Dearman)
  + Why do you think it’s important to acknowledge our guilt before God?
  + Do you find it hard to confess to the Lord? If so, why or why not?
* **Read Jeremiah 4:1-2** 
  + According to this passage, what does repentance lead to?
  + **Read Genesis 12:1-3**
  + What do you think is the significance of the Abrahamic covenant (or promise) being placed in Jeremiah alongside of repentance?
  + Does the idea of repentance change for you knowing that it could ultimately lead to nations coming to find blessing and glory in God?

**Read Jeremiah 4:5-8 & 13-18.** Although God gave Judah many chances, she did not heed Jeremiah’s warning to repent and return to the Lord, preferring false teaching to truth (ch 5 v. 10-13). God even challenged Jeremiah to find a single righteous person in Jerusalem (similar to the account with Abraham and Sodom and Gomorrah) with no positive outcome. Ultimately, chapters 5 and 6 describe the desolation and devastation that will occur in Judah because of their sin and unrepentant ways. God declares judgement on Israel through devastation from the north (ultimately Babylon would destroy Judah and take captives).

**Read Jeremiah 6:27-30**

* What does this description tell us about the role that Jeremiah (and any OT prophet) is called to serve?
* How does thinking about God’s work of judgment as a refining process aid you in understanding it?
* What parts of your life might God be working on refining right now?

**Conclusion:**

**Read Romans 2:4**

* How does this verse further illuminate what we’ve studied today in Jeremiah?
* What passages or teachings from this study stand out to you the most where you are in your life and relationship to God?
* What difference does Jesus make in helping you understand Jeremiah and God’s forgiveness?
  + Was the emphasis that the Old Testament placed upon repentance surprising to you?

**Challenge:**

Over the next week, spend time praying that God would continue to refine you in that area you mentioned (or thought about) earlier, or perhaps praying that you would come to see and know where he is trying to refine you.

Extra Notes:

**Baal worship background:** (mentioned in v. 8 and the main source of idolatry for the israelites). Baal was the weather-god worshiped in Syria-Palestine, who they saw as in control over agriculture and fertility, rainfall and productivity. Since ancient Israel was always an agricultural society and their economic prosperity depended on rain, Baal worship was of unrivaled importance. Baal was localized at different shrines identified by unique names. The Baal religion highly appealed to the human sexual drive by way of ritual prostitution. Sexual behavior at the shrines was expected to cause the Baals to respond in like manner - to follow the worshipers by producing for them fertile seed and good crop. Israelites main source of economic provision was through agriculture, so they turned to baal. Worshipping baal was a way to worship money, sex and power while also being “religious.”

* Paul R. House (Beeson Divinity) & Robert Vasholz (Covenant Theological Seminary) taken from ESV study bible