

AM Jeremiah 2:1-19 Corrective for today's rejection of God

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to the scriptures in the book of Jeremiah, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 2, page 760 in your pew bibles.

19 verses. Hear the word of God. The word of the Lord came to me saying, go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem.

Thus says the Lord, I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt. Disaster came upon them, declares the Lord. Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clients of the house of Israel.

Thus says the Lord, what wrong did your fathers find in me, that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?

[1 : 23] They did not say, where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in the land of deserts and pits, and in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells.

And I brought you into a land of land, and I brought you into a land, and I brought you into a plentiful land, to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.

The priests did not say, where is the Lord? Those who handled the law did not know me. The shepherds transgressed against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after things that did not know me.

Therefore, I still contend, declares the Lord, and with your children's children, I will contend. For the cross to the coast of Cyprus, and see, or send to Kedar, and examine with care.

See if there has been such a thing. Has a nation changed its gods, even though there are no gods? But my people have changed their glory, for that which does not profit.

[2 : 42] Be appalled, O heavens, at this. Be shocked. Be utterly desolate, declares the Lord. For my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hew out cisterns for themselves.

Broken cisterns that can hold no water. Is Israel a slave? Is he a home-born servant? Why then has he become a prey? The lions have roared against him.

They have roared loudly. They have made his land a waste. His cities are in ruins, without inhabitant. Moreover, the men of Memphis and Telfanus have shaved the crown of your head.

Have you not brought this upon yourself, by forsaking the Lord your God, when he led you in the way? And now, what do you gain by going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile?

Or what do you gain by going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates? Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you.

[3 : 48] Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God. The fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord God of hosts.

Amen. May the Lord have his blessing to the public reading of his holy and inspired word. Let's continue in passage that we've read in Jeremiah chapter 2.

Jeremiah chapter 2 and 4. This morning, we'll be looking specifically at verse 5. I'll read verse 4.

Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. Thus says the Lord, What wrong did your fathers find in me, that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?

Jeremiah the prophet was called to be a prophet when he was very, very young. In fact, we read in verse 5 in chapter 1. Before I formed you, this is what he was saying to Jeremiah.

[5 : 03] Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you, I appointed you a prophet to the nations. He was very much already in the eye of Almighty God to be one day served as a prophet.

This is around 600 BC. And the prophet Jeremiah served the Lord faithfully for 40 years. He served during a time when Israel was in trouble in many ways, militarily, morally, spiritually.

Israel was in big trouble. Babylon was already at the doorstep. And God raised up Jeremiah to challenge the Israelites, to challenge them, to consider their ways.

He ministered, like I said, for about 40 years. Sadly, he only saw two converts. And that was his lot and portion. That was good enough for the Lord.

He served the Lord and served his purpose well. And in so doing, he was hated by his own fellow Israelites. It's likely that he died in Egypt, being taken by his own countrymen against his will, soon after the fall of Jerusalem.

[6 : 29] And you can read all that in Jeremiah 43. Now, I've said already that God raised up Jeremiah to challenge the Israelites. They needed that challenge.

They needed the Lord to remind them of their sin, of their rejection of God, of their turning their backs on God.

And God is going to use different arguments through Jeremiah to challenge these Israelites. So, notice in chapter 2, the Lord started really positively with them.

In chapter 2, we read in verse 2, Thus says the Lord, I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in the land not sown.

Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest. See how positive God starts, one of these string of arguments against the Israelites.

[7 : 36] He started off well, but then, there's always that but there, he's going to go on to say, what happened to you all? You started off well.

You devoted to the Lord. You loved the Lord. You followed the Lord in the wilderness. But then, what happened?

What's happened to you? What's happened to you all? And one of the arguments we're going to see is in verse 5. In fact, that would be kind of the first argument from the Lord through Jeremiah. And it's important for us today. We must take heed to what we are hearing from God's Word this morning today.

If you are not a believer in Christ this morning, if you do not know the Lord in a real and living way in your heart, well, then there's a challenge there that's very much relevant for you.

[8 : 37] And even for those of us who are Christians, well, let this be a warning. Let this verse, in verse 5, be a warning for us not to turn back and to look at the world that we live in and say, hmm, the world has something appealing about it.

Hebrews chapter 10, we read Paul writes, but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

If we shrink back, my soul has no pleasure in him. This is God warning us not to look at this world that we live in and see the appeal of it all and turn our backs on God and go after the things of this world.

So that let it be a warning for us, even for those of us who are Christians. Now, when we look at verse 5, we can see, first of all, there's a question from God.

God has a question. He's going to raise a question with the Israelites. And he's going to direct this question not just to the Israelites then, but this question can also be directed to us today.

[9 : 56] God's word says, what wrong did your fathers find in me? What wrong did your fathers find in me? He's challenging the Israelites, what have your forefathers, your ancestors, what sin did they find in me?

What defects did they find in me? This is God saying to the Israelites, what defects did they find in me? What weakness did they find?

What failings did they find in me? In our Creator God, in the God who created all things out of nothing, in God, in all His perfections, is saying to the Israelites, well, what did your forefathers see that was defective, wrong, sinful, failings, weakness, what did they see in me?

What wrong did your fathers find in me? That they went far from me and went after worthlessness, and so on. You know, when God raises a question, we know what the answer is.

We know what the answer ought to be. The answer ought to be nothing. When God raises a question, He's asking the question, not because He didn't know the answer, but He's asking the question because He wants to challenge the hearers.

[11:26] Yeah? So, for example, we read in the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, when Adam and Eve fell, the first question that God asks is, where are you?

Obviously, God knew where Adam was. You know, this is God we're talking about, God who sees all things, who knows all things, who is in control over all things.

God knew exactly where Adam was, but yet He asked, where are you? And that was obviously a challenge to Adam. And so, likewise, this question here, what wrong did your fathers find in me? The answer ought to be nothing. Amazingly, amazingly, it's evident from this question that there were those who found something wrong with God.

amazingly, there were those who, some of their forefathers, their ancestors, who found something wrong with God. They found some weakness, some failing, some defects in Almighty God.

[12:38] And so, because of their perception, their misunderstanding of who God is, they picked up on these little apparent defects, failings, weaknesses of God, and they say, ah, we don't need God anymore.

We can turn our backs on Him. This God is not worth our worship, not worth our love, not worth our devotion. We can turn our backs on God.

That's basically what this question is implying. Now, there's nothing new under the sun. as the book of Ecclesiastes informs us.

There's nothing new under the sun. We live in this day and age where there are some who would, who would poke holes at the Christian faith. We see in this society, in this country, there are those who say, oh, the Christian faith is, is full of, it's bad, you may have heard of some high profile cases of young people who grew up in Christian families, in good sound churches, perhaps even made a credible profession of faith, and then depart from the faith.

High profile cases such as people like Abraham Piper, you know, John Piper's son, who, who was brought up in the faith, made a profession, apparently, baptized and so on, and then now he's on social media, debunking the Christian faith.

[14:17] Everything that his father stood for, he's tearing it down one by one, or so he thinks anyway. And sometimes you see on the internet, on social media, you know, never mind social media, even in the media itself, you know, people are saying that the Christian faith oppresses women and minorities, or the Christian faith promotes slavery, you know, the Christian faith get this hinders progress in society, you know, we mustn't have the Christian faith in society because it hinders progress, you know, you hear that in the news, in large chunks of societies.

And then, of course, there's the usual, you know, the moral failings of church leaders means, oh, that's it, the Christian faith is bad, it's wrong. There's all these things that, you know, just like the time of Jeremiah, there are those who think that there's something wrong with God, there's something wrong with the faith of the fathers.

And because of that, they have turned away and pursued other things. What are we like?

Are we like the Israelites? Do we wish to follow that mindset? You know, something, a difficult providence in a home, perhaps a death in a family, lost in one's job, God's fault.

It's all God's fault. Are we going down that road like the Israelites did? We'll trust that we are not going to go down that road.

[16:14] You know, God still asks questions today. He's still asking questions even today. Even in the New Testament, there are questions being asked to challenge us. You know, for example, in 1 Corinthians 6, we read, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

What should be our response? What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? The answer is that there should be no fellowship between light and darkness.

that would indicate our obedience to the Lord, if we truly belong to the Lord.

There's a challenge there. When God asks a question, there's a challenge there for us. But there's also a challenge there for us when we see in the day and age that we live in, many who have turned

their backs on God because of their misconception, their misunderstanding of what the Christian faith is all about.

And so they pick on all these little things, usually without any scripture backing, and they say because of that, the Christian faith is to be rejected.

[17:41] I've seen this fairly recently on the internet. One particular cathedral in England is putting on one of those pride events, and of course, when you look at the social media, there's all the comments saying, you know, wonderful, this is so great.

That one person wrote this comment, this is wrong. You know, a Christian church, a cathedral for that matter, a Christian church shouldn't be promoting this. And of course, you know what's going to happen, the next string of comments were basically denouncing this person.

And if you read the comments, and I read the comments, and I look at them, one of the comments was this, well, what's the chapter and verse of what you're saying, why this is wrong?

What's the chapter and verse as to why is wrong for the church to put on pride events? and one person put down three parts of the New Testament.

Romans chapter 1, Matthew 19, the Lord saying that marriage between one man and one woman, Romans chapter 1 is talking about the decline, the moral declension of society, is marked, is the pinnacle of the decline in society, is marked by homosexuality.

[19:09] And then in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, but such were some of you, but now you're washed, you're cleansed. And the person just went off tangent, the same commentator wrote off tangent, well, didn't even address any of the passages, but just went on to talk about what were mixed fibers in the Old Testament?

What about mixed foods? What about food laws? If people are just like those times, they will find anything just to put holes, find holes in the Christian faith.

That's what society is like. I trust and I hope that none of us find that position. thinking that we can find something wrong with God.

What wrong did your fathers find in me? Now, we read, we continue in the second part, so the first part is God has a question, what wrong did your fathers find in me, that they went far from me and went after worthlessness and became worthless.

So, my next point is, what did these Israelites do? What have they done? done? What had they done? They evidently, they did something really, really bad so that God had to challenge them with this question.

[20:38] And you see, it's a very, if you look at the second part of this verse, you can see that the response or what the Israelites did was a very disproportionate or very inconsistent action.

They saw something about God, perhaps they didn't even question it, perhaps they didn't ask the questions, why is this the case? They didn't ask the priest or perhaps somebody who is a bit more informed, they didn't ask the questions, well, I notice in the Old Testament there's this thing, you know, can you explain to me?

They didn't ask those questions and there's nothing wrong, you know, to ask questions about the Bible, okay, the Bible is, you know, it's 66 books written over several thousands of years by about 40 authors and yet with a consistent message, so yes, it is, there are challenging parts in the Bible, but if you have questions, ask somebody, but it's evident that these people didn't ask the questions and just said, oh, I didn't understand, but it must be wrong, it must be bad, and so they've gone in a very disproportionate and inconsistent even swung after vanity, after worthlessness, we read, the word here in your ESV is worthlessness, if you have the NIV, it says worthless idols, don't think it's just an idol that they were pursuing, they were pursuing something a bit more than that, it wasn't just an idol, the actual word apparently in the

Hebrew is something along the lines of vanity, breath, vapor, you can see where this is going, breath and vapor, here today, gone tomorrow, futility, emptiness, I think the best word to describe this is delusion, the word worthlessness is their pursuit after a delusion, it's basically a noun, their pursuit after a delusion, they had the concrete truth before them but they've now turned aside and pursued after a delusion, now this delusion could be, yes it could be idols, the idols of other nations, it could be money, it could be influence, it could be power, it could be a lot of other things, possessions, they pursued after a delusion, here today, gone tomorrow, futility, vapor, breath, but you see notice this, after they've pursued after, went after worthlessness or a delusion, they became worthless, it's interesting, the noun has become a verb, yeah, it's gone, while they pursue after this delusion, and it could be a lot of things, not just a physical idol, they, while pursuing after a

delusion, they've become that, they've become vain, they've become deluded, interested, interesting, is it not, that the more somebody pursues after the world, the more they would take on the worldliness, the things of the world, the Hebrew word apparently means to act emptily, to become vain, to be led astray, the noun has become a verb, so they've gone from having the word of God in their midst, with the worship of

God, all set forth by God himself, with the priests, and so on, and they've gone from that, to a delusion, to something which is futile, vain, breath, vapor, and in pursuing that, they've become that, that thing, whatever that thing they are pursuing, they've now took it on for them, it's no wonder why God would start this verse with that question, what wrong did your fathers find in me?

[25 : 26] You know, you've got all the wonderful things, and it's going to go on to say in verse 6 and 7, it's going to be more than just the worship of God, it's all there for them, they've got everything, everything right at their doorstep, and note, they've chosen to pursue the things of the world, they've turned their backs on God, and they pursue after worthlessness, delusion, vapor.

John Calvin said, Jeremiah said, here, Jeremiah charges the people with two crimes, that they had departed from the true God, whom they had found to be a deliverer, and that they had become vain in their devices, or in other words, that they will become for no reason, apostate.

They turned their backs on God, and they turned their backs from everything that is good and right in God. You know, it's the same today, is it not?

It's the same today. There are those who say that the Bible is out of date, and that they adopt the blame game, everything is wrong with God, everything is wrong with the Bible.

If there are atheists, they say God doesn't exist, and so if God doesn't exist, there's no such thing, there's no need for the Christian faith, the Bible is a whole lot of myths and fairy tales, and then there's all the failings of the Christian faith, all the weaknesses, and so they turn their backs on God.

[27 : 06] And then what happens next? Don't think that when a person turns their back on God, means they're going to have a wonderful life. Far from it, far from it.

If what this verse is saying is true, and it is true, then what people are turning to, and when they turn away from God, is it going to turn to things which are worthless, which are vain, which are a vapour, empty, a delusion.

And yes, in this day and age, it could be money, it could be power, it could be influence, the pursuit of possessions, the pursuit for money, is rife in society.

And, you know, once we start pursuing after things as a noun, we start to take this upon ourselves, it becomes a verb in our lives. The object of our affections has now become a pursuit in our lives. we start to act in a vain sort of way. We start to pursue after things which doesn't satisfy, as I mentioned to the children earlier.

[28 : 29] And what does this lead to? Sadness, dissatisfaction, no contentment. just look at this society, just look at this country.

I know I've mentioned this before in different times when I'm here, you know, the drug use in this country, especially places like Glasgow, the drug use, alcohol abuse, why do you think that's the case?

You can increase the tax, you can, for some bizarre reason, put in rooms for drug users to take drugs legally. You think that's going to solve the problems?

This is, I know this is the more extreme cases, but there are many who perhaps are not in that category, but who are still in that same group of people who are pursuing after happiness and satisfaction outside of Christ, outside of the Christian faith, and see the sadness, see the dissatisfaction, the emptiness of it all.

It's so evident that it's so common in this day and age that we live in. You know, there's a proverb, Proverbs 23, verse 7, in the authorized version, says, for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.

[30 : 07] For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. What we pursue in our life, what we really desire in our hearts, it will become us. That's what we will become.

If we think, if we crave after money and possessions and a good life, well, that will be us. It will consume us.

It will be our all-consuming passion. That's what we become. That's what we will become. The pursuit for faith and fortune will never lead to real lasting happiness, but we will lead to troubles, but yet that's what we have become in society.

And ironically, society in general knows that as well. I'm not saying something which is, oh, some would say, oh, Christians who dream up about all these things.

Christians who just take the Bible, read certain passages, so they say, and because of that, they will paint society in this very negative light.

[31 : 13] But what I'm saying is, it has been shown even amongst secular society as well, even among scientists, among psychologists and sociologists, they found, they found and been published in journals, that graduates who prioritise money over time, ended up being less happy.

Now, you could have just said, I told you so. I could have just told you without you putting all the effort into explaining that. But hey, this is what secular society has found.

Those graduates, you know, people who finish university and so on, and those who prioritise money, the pursuit of money, over time, will end up being less happy.

And they have also found, in another study, that wealthier people are happier, but, but, there's always this but, but this is only temporary.

They may be happier, but it's only a temporary thing. And in fact, there's almost like a threshold in America, this is a study in America, that once you reach a certain level, a certain salary or income level, your happiness level shoots up, but once you reach that level, it kind of stays stagnant, even the more money you get, it's not going to make your happiness level go up.

[32 : 51] So all that money that you want can pursue, the likelihood is probably going to make you more stressed, more dissatisfied. You know, songs, songs have been written about this.

Movies have been made to portray this. The pursuit of happiness, the pursuit of money, the pursuit of fame and fortune. Movies have been made to portray this. Sermons have been preached in the 40s and the 50s to discuss this.

So what I'm saying is there's nothing new. There's nothing new. What Jeremiah is saying has been echoed through the course of history.

What wrongs did your fathers find in me that they went far from me and went after worthlessness and became worthless? Now, we can't leave this place without considering the corrective, the solution here.

And God has given us a solution. In verse 6, they did not say, where is the Lord who brought us up out of the land of Egypt? Notice this, the way God is going to deal with this, he's not going to tell them what they did which was wrong, it's already kind of implied there in verse 5, the second part, but what he's going to do is he's going to address it by reminding them, by reminding them of how God dealt with his people in times past.

[34 : 29] He's going to remind them of the goodness of God in the history of the Israelites. God is going to tell the Israelites to look back, you know, your forefathers, what wrong did your fathers find in me?

Your forefathers said to Abraham well, why not look further, further, further back? Think, remember, remember what I did for you, remember what I did for you, your forefathers too.

Remember that I delivered you, your forefathers, your nation from slavery who, they did not say where is the Lord who brought us out from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in the land of deserts and pits and so on and so forth.

And I brought you in verse 7, and I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. He's going to tell them, well, remember me? Remember me?

What I did for you? How I delivered you from slavery? and how I brought you into the promised land filled with milk and honey? Remember that? You know, there's a place when we are challenged by our family and friends, by people on the streets, when people are asking about the Christian faith or challenging us about the Christian faith.

[35 : 48] There's a place for apologetics, yes, no doubt about that. As I mentioned, there's going to be open air service with Douglas Young from Open Air Mission.

Well, see how he handles the people in the high street of Dumfries. See how he's going to deal with that.

Now, there is a place for apologetics, and when you go into the market square, in the high street, people will challenge you on the Christian faith. Yes, you can explain. you know, all about creation, and so on and so forth, but sometimes what we need to do is to explain who God is, in the way the Lord dealt with us, as people, as society, as a nation.

And always, always turn back to the Word of God. This is how God is dealing with the Israelites. He's telling them, look back at your history. Of course, the history being the Word of God itself. When people say, oh, doesn't the Christian faith, you know, oppress women and minorities? Well, what does the Bible have to say? The Bible has to say a lot of very, very positive things about women.

[37 : 07] How do women ministered to Jesus? How they witnessed his resurrection, first of all? How Mary was highly favoured. So many, you know, the Word of God has lots of things that is good to say about women.

And they talk about Christians promoting slavery? Well, no. who was the one who helped abolish slavery in this country? Well, William Wilberforce, Christian man.

And when people challenge us, you know, what about all those Christian leaders who fail? Well, it doesn't mean that a Christian leader who's failed means the whole Christian faith is failed.

failed. One writer used to put it this way, if a musician plays Mozart badly, who failed?

Mozart or the musician? Well, it's obviously the musician himself or herself. Nothing wrong with Mozart. And so when a Christian person fails, it doesn't mean that the whole Christian faith is a failure.

[38 : 22] It doesn't mean that God has failed. It doesn't mean that the whole Christian faith is to be debunked. No, that's not true and that's not right. But see, God in dealing with these Israelites, in challenging them, he's going to give them a way out of this rut that they're in.

They pursued after worthlessness and now they become worthless. And God is going to say to them, the corrective is this. Remember me, what I did for you. How the Lord has brought you out of Egypt as slaves and brought you into the promised land, placed with milk and honey, all the nice, wonderful things.

And the same with us. How can we best tell the society that is now sinking in the worst case scenario, drugs and alcoholism, what can we tell society in the high street?

Say for example on the 90th of August with OAM, what are you going to say to them? Well we direct them back to the word of God. We tell them, we tell these friends, in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

This is Jesus Christ. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made, that was made.

[39 : 56] In him was life. We tell them that, we tell them in him, in Christ was life, and the life was the light of man, the light shining darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

We tell them that, that Jesus Christ came into this world 2,000 years ago, born as a babe in Bethlehem, as we have read in John 1, and we tell them, we tell these folks, this is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

That's what he came to do. And then we tell them, we bring them back to the scriptures, the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We tell people that, and if you hear this morning, you're not a believer in Christ, well, this is exactly the same message you'll be hearing, not just from OEM, but from me as well, and it's the same message any Christian ought to say.

If you're here and you're not a believer in Christ, well, the same answer is given to you, from the Lord himself, reminding you, turn back to the scriptures, see what the Lord has done for us, what has done for you, for me, he's given us life, he's given us air to breathe, he's given us this place, it's a place of worship, but why, why?

[41 : 29] Well, he reminds us that he came to die on the cross of Calvary, to save us from our sins, because we are sinners, and we need the Lord Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, through his death, through his resurrection, we can be found in him, and all we need to do is return to him, and say, Lord have mercy on me, a sinner, Lord save me from my sins, Lord have mercy on me, save me, make me one of yours, make me a child of God, and bless me, and keep me.

Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to our hearts, and to, and may this question be a challenge for us, what wrong did your fathers find in me, that they went far from me?

We'll close this morning.