

Return to Me

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[0:00] Isn't it fun that as a church that doesn't have a strict liturgy, we have a very strict order in which we do things.

! Well, good morning. My name is Martin and we will this morning be looking at Jeremiah chapters 2 to 4. I hope I haven't bitten off more than we can chew. We'll see. You can be the judge of that by the end of the talk this morning.

But you might like to start doing there, Jeremiah chapter 2 to 4. I will say a few words by way of introduction first, but let me commit this time to the Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the scriptures through which we get to know you as our God, our Father, through which we get to know our Saviour Jesus, that we might be reconciled to you.

We pray that you would guide us in our meditations on your word this morning. And we pray that as we hear, we would respond from the heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Apostle John concludes his first epistle with the words, Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

[1:29] Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Now, it's a strange way to end the letter. The first epistle of John, if you're familiar with it, you may know it's full of the themes of God's love, of faith, of the assurance of salvation, of Jesus' command that we love one another, the assurance that we're God's children, loved by the Father.

In fact, in the previous sentence, the penultimate verse in the first epistle of John, it talks about knowing God, about our union with God the Father through being united with his Son, Jesus Christ. It talks about eternal life, the eternal life that's found in Jesus. And then, abruptly, we have this final sentence, Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

It's, in fact, the only use of the word idols in the book of 1 John. We're not studying 1 John this morning, but anyway, this is just the introduction. It's the only use of the word idols in the book of 1 John.

It seems to come from nowhere and leave nowhere. And yet, John chose to end his letter, this message about faith and love and life, with this short, stark warning about idolatry.

[2:56] Actually, it may hearken back to something John had said earlier in his letter. In 1 John 2, verse 15 and 16, he says, Do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

If John has that in mind when he says, keep yourselves from idols, then the idolatry John is thinking about is not just the worship of Jupiter or Mars or Athena or Artemis or Isis or any of the pantheon of ancient gods.

John recognized that idolatry could take a more insidious form, that is, a love of the world and the things in the world.

And when he speaks that way, he's not talking about the legitimate enjoyment of God's good creation. He's talking about any inordinate, covetous, misshapen love that displaces God.

[4:14] And John says, Even though you know the Father and the Son, even though you have eternal life, even though you're beloved children of God, even though you have victory over the world through believing in Jesus, even though all those things are true, yet heed this warning, keep yourselves from idols.

In other words, we who believe in Jesus are not immune to the seduction and deception of idolatry. And I wonder, like, if the Apostle John were to come here to Australia in the 21st century and cast his appraising eye over our society, what would he see?

Now, if he would appraise our society with its boasts and its greed and its obsessions and its addictions and its fixations, I think he would no doubt perceive the same danger for us in the 21st century as he did for his first readers in the 1st century.

And he would say to us, Little children, keep yourselves from idols. In 626 BC, in the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah, God called Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations and especially to his people Judah, the nation of Judah.

[5:45] And as his first assignment, God sent Jeremiah to Jerusalem, to the city which was the home of the Lord's temple, the home of the king's palace, with a message for the people, a message that could be summed up, why have you forsaken me to follow worthless idols?

And we're going to listen to part of that message in a moment as Beck reads it for us. As we listen to this part of the message, we're going to read the, Beck will read the first half of chapter 2.

I want you to bear in mind the Apostle John's exhortation, Little children, keep yourselves from idols. And listen to the way God speaks to Judah here, the way he drives home to Judah, that it is absolute folly, utter folly, to forsake the Lord in order to follow idols.

So Beck, I'm not sure where about, there you are. Beck is going to come out and read Jeremiah chapter 2 verses 1 to 19. And think about how do we see it's utter folly to forsake the Lord.

Thanks, Beck. Okay, starting at verse 1 of chapter 2.

[7:10] 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 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? They did not say, Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, 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 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.

[8:39] The priests did not say, Where is the Lord? Those who handle the law did not know me. The shepherds transgressed against me.

The prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit. Therefore, I still contend with you, declares the Lord, and with your children's children, I will contend.

For cross to the coasts 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 they are no gods?

But my people have changed their glory, for that which does not profit. 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 mortars, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

[9:59] 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 ruin, without inhabitant. Moreover, the men of Memphis and Tapanis 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.

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.

[11:08] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks, Peg.

Okay, well, let's consider these verses, this section. The first three verses then of chapter two, we have like this brief introduction, which is a nostalgic recollection of Israel's past, the honeymoon period of Israel's relationship with God.

God remembers and he reminds his people there in verse two of the devotion of your youth and your love as a bride.

They're following after him in the wilderness. And how he, in verse three, cherished them. They were precious to him. They were wholly set apart for him and protected by him.

Now, you could read this and raise an eyebrow and say, was Israel's relationship with God ever really like this?

[12:14] It is, you might think, a rose-coloured glasses perspective on even Israel's beginning. And if you were to read through the book of Exodus and the book of Numbers, you know, those years Israel spent in the wilderness, there are plenty of spectacular failures of Israel in those years.

So what we have here in verses one to three is this idealised presentation of the past. What Israel were made to be and what they were supposed to be?

Maybe, you see, precise historical accuracy, I don't think, is the point here in these first three verses. Rather, it's not so much about how good Israel once were.

The point of this chapter is about how far they had fallen from what they ought to have been, what they could have been, what they were made to be. Verse five, what wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me and went after worthlessness and became worthless?

Now, in the montage of metaphors that follow, God makes the case that it is utter folly to turn away from him.

[13:31] It's madness to turn away from God. And the same reasons that God gave Judah for why it's folly to turn away from him are just as applicable for us today. Why it'd be folly for us to turn away from the Lord.

I've got three reasons from those verses that Beck just read for us. First, from verses five to eight, it's utter folly to forsake the Lord after all the good he has done for you.

It's utter folly to forsake the Lord after all the good he's done for you. How could Israel forget this?

Verse six, they did not say, where is the Lord?

How could they forget, verse six, the God who brought them up out of the land of Egypt? How could they forget, again in verse six, the God who led them in the wilderness?

How could they forget, verse seven, the God who brought them into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things? Now maybe forget isn't even really the right word here.

[14:37] Maybe they didn't exactly forget. They just lost interest. Even the leaders who'd been charged with reminding the people of the love of God, even they lost interest.

Verse eight, the priest did not say, where is the Lord? Those who handle the Lord did not know me. The shepherds transgressed against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit.

I mean, how can this be? How can you forget God, forsake God, drift away from God, just lose interest in God when he's been so good to you?

I mean, if that's true for Israel, isn't it even more true for us? God forgave our sins. God gave us his Holy Spirit.

God made us his own. He adopted us as his children. He will raise us up in glory. He promises us eternity. And now he protects us by faith as we wait.

[15:52] He gifts us for service. He places us in a community of people. He teaches us love and humility and self-control and righteousness.

Hasn't God been good?

To us? How could we just lose interest in God? It makes no sense.

I mean, what would we replace God with? The God who's been so good to us. Do you see what God says about it? Like whatever we might replace God with? Verse four, they went after worthlessness and became worthless.

That word worthlessness there is the same word that's used in the book of Ecclesiastes, the Hebrew word hebel, which means, in that expression in the book of Ecclesiastes, vanity of vanities, or everything is meaningless.

It just means something that's vain, it's empty, it's vapor, it's nothing. They went far from the living, true, good God and went after nothing, worthlessness.

[17:15] How could we do that? Verse eight, they went after things that, end of verse eight, that do not profit, that give them nothing, that, from which no good comes.

empty idols. Why? It makes no sense. There was a period last year when I was becoming addicted to a game on my phone.

Some of you are laughing. Some of you are, I don't know, maybe looking sideways or looking down or something nervously. But anyway, I was becoming addicted to a game on my phone and Jen, my wife, she was patient with me but not altogether silent which was probably good.

But as I reflect back on that, like what good did it give me, my attachment to this game on my phone? Like it just made me more distracted, more irritable.

I was reading less, I was thinking about God less and I didn't even enjoy it. It was worthless. It didn't profit.

[18:29] And the more I went after it, the more worthless I became. Why would we forsake God who brought us up from sin and death, who leads us in the wilderness, who will bring us into a plentiful land to fill us with good things?

Why would we forsake God? For that which is worthless and does not profit. It makes no sense. Secondly, verse 9 to 13, it's utter folly to forsake the Lord, not only, as we saw firstly, because of the good he's done for us, but in verse 9 to 13, it's utter folly to forsake the Lord because he himself is our incomparable glory.

He himself is our incomparable glory. The best thing about being saved by God and belonging to God and knowing God is God himself. Look at verse 10.

For cross to the coast of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care and see if there has been any, if there has been such a thing. Has a nation changed its gods?

I mean, the other nations don't go around changing their gods. Jeremiah says, even though there are no gods, even though they're fake and they're nothing and they're empty, the nations don't change their gods.

[19:58] But my people have changed, see what God says here, verse 11, my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

When Israel gave up on their God, the God, when Israel gave up on God, they gave up their glory for nothing.

The Lord was Israel's glory. How much more is he our glory? Of course, we can't fully grasp the glory of God, but we get a sense, a glimpse of the glory of God when we behold his works.

See, consider God's work of creation. The heavens declare the glory of God, Psalm 19 says, and modern science has in no way diminished their testimony.

You know, an ancient Israelite might look up at the expansive beauty of the night sky, which we can't see because we live in a city and it's obscured by all the lights, city lights, but an ancient Israelite might look up at the expansive beauty of the night sky and marvel at the glory of God.

[21:17] But do we marvel any less with telescopes and satellites peering into the depths of the universe? There are apparently somewhere between 100 and 400 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy.

So let's take the lower figure, 100 billion. There are 8.3 billion people on the planet Earth. That means in our galaxy alone there are at least 12 times as many stars as there are people.

I mean, if we were to claim stars, just divide them among, we would have 12 stars each. In the Milky Way galaxy. I mean, some of you think, you know, will you ever be able to afford to buy a home or something?

But you know, there's 12 stars out there for you if you can get to them. But that's just one galaxy. I mean, apparently, I don't know how on Earth astrophysicists come to this figure, but apparently there are perhaps 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe.

2,000 billion galaxies. That's, you can not only have your 12 stars in the Milky Way galaxy, you can have 240 galaxies in the observable universe. I mean, consider God's work of creation and he spoke and it came into being, isn't the Lord glorious?

[22:49] Consider God's work of redemption. The God who created all this. The God who is, let me read some words from the Baptist Confession of Faith, which is just summarizing Scripture.

The God who is infinite in being and perfection, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way, infinite, most holy, most wise, most free.

Again, also from the Baptist Confession, he is alone the fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things and he hath most sovereign dominion over all creatures to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever he himself pleases.

Eternal, almighty, all powerful, dominion over all, the fount of all being and yet this same God, this very same God in the person of his son entered into his creation, subjected himself not only to become a man, but to suffer at the hands of men, to suffer the malice and cruelty of men, whom he himself had made.

the God who is grieved by our sin shed the tears that should have been ours.

[24:24] The God whose anger is aroused by our sin drank the cup of wrath that should have been ours. The God whom we had forsaken was himself forsaken for us.

we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only son who came from the father full of grace and truth.

You know, someone will be, you know, chuffed, a bit pleased with themselves when they know a reliable mechanic or plumber that they can recommend to their friends.

You know, hard to find. we know the living God, immortal and invisible.

He is ours. The vast heavens themselves, God says, the vast heavens which obey every command of their creator, they shudder at our idolatry.

[25:29] Verse 12, 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 hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

It's utter folly to forsake the Lord, for he himself is our supreme glory. Thirdly, verse 14 to 19, it's utter folly to forsake the Lord, because to do so leads to our own ruin.

Verse 14, 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 a ruin without inhabitant.

Israel was not redeemed from Egypt only to be enslaved again. They were not given the plentiful land, only to have it plundered by the nations surrounding them, and yet that is what had happened. And God's people had no one to blame but themselves. Verse 17, have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the Lord your God when he led you in the way?

[26:48] Verse 19, your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. 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. See that it is evil and bitter to forsake the Lord. Forsaking the Lord is evil, it's wicked, it's treacherous. You know, Aussies tend to think that, you know, our lives are our own, we just belong to ourselves, and, you know, maybe we'd be doing God a huge favour if we were to give him a wave or a nod every now and then.

But of course, that's deception. We belong to him, he owns us, we owe him our worship, our love, our obedience, our devotion, our trust.

God is not a stranger in the universe, he is the owner of the universe, he is our maker, our master, our Lord and our God, our Father, and it is evil to forsake him.

But also, it's bitter to forsake him. For that way leads only to desolation and death and misery and ruin.

[28:03] There's no life apart from the fountain, there's no joy apart from his blessedness, there's no peace apart from his love. What utter folly to forsake the Lord our God.

The rest of chapter two continues in the same vein, we won't look at it. I had a few verses I was going to show you but we're shortish on time so we'll skip over those.

But it continues in the same vein. Can you see, brothers and sisters, what utter folly it is to forsake the Lord after all the good he's done for us because he himself is our incomparable glory when forsaking him leads only to misery and ruin.

Exchanging the fountain of living water for broken cisterns is never a good deal. I have a friend who forsook the Lord for a relationship with a non-believer.

Another friend who forsook the Lord out of intellectual pride and in order to fit in with the world.

Another friend who forsook the Lord as academic and professional accomplishment gradually squeezed out his love for God.

[29:21] God and what did any of them gain by forsaking the Lord? Nothing.

And yet aren't we prone to the same defection? Little children keep yourselves from idols. and what are we tempted to go after worthlessness?

How often do we exchange our glory for that which does not profit? How often are our hearts captivated by trivial things rather than the grandeur and splendor of God?

Jeremiah 2 has many metaphors for Israel's relationship with God but there's one central recurring metaphor throughout these chapters and that is of Israel as an unfaithful bride estranged from her husband.

And by the time we get to chapter 3 God asks the question have Israel and Judah passed the point of no return? To look just briefly at a few verses here in chapter 3 verse 1 if a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife that's what Israel had done left the Lord and married someone else gone after other gods if a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife will he return to her?

[31:00] Would not that land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers and would you return to me declares the Lord?

See what God's saying here? He's saying is it too late? God would he return? God won't return to them.

They won't return to him. Have they passed the point of no return? God says even if you make a pretense of returning to me it won't be sincere.

Verse 4 Have you not just now called to me my father? You're the friend of my youth. Will he be angry forever? Will he be indignant to the end? Behold you've spoken but you have done all the evil that you could.

Was it too late for Israel and Judah? Does idolatry push us past the point of no return? By all rights it does. We have no power to return to God.

[32:06] We have no right to expect that he should return to us. Such is the treachery of idolatry. And yet and yet in the rest of chapter three we hear the Lord calling to Israel again and again.

Chapter three verse twelve return faithless Israel. Three verse fourteen return O faithless children. Three verse twenty two return O faithless sons.

Chapter four verse one return O Israel. The word faithless in each of those verses in chapter three twelve fourteen and twenty two is a word which means those who have turned those who have turned back those who have turned away.

So God is saying you who have turned away turn back to me. You have turned away Israel my sons return now there's a complexity to Jeremiah chapter three that I don't want to ignore but also which I don't want to distract us.

So let's make a deal I want to make a deal with you I will do my best to explain it as briefly as I can and I want you to do your best to be patient with me as I do try and explain it.

[33:51] Okay we'll get to the main point soon I realise we haven't read out chapter three I'm not going to read it out in full I'll show you some verses that you need to see here's the complexity right you see there in chapter three verse six the first it's the Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah now we'll come back to that but you might remember Josiah is

the king who was king when Jeremiah was called as a prophet the first of the five kings that Jeremiah would outlast and so this is early days in Jeremiah's ministry we'll come back to King Josiah but then in verses six to ten we have this extended metaphor of two sisters there is in verse six one sister whom God calls faithless Israel and the second sister whom God calls in verse eight treacherous Judah Israel and Judah two sisters now the background to that is the history of

Israel around around 1000 BC David King David was king over all of Israel and as was his son Solomon but after Solomon's death and this is some 300 years before Jeremiah after Solomon's death Israel split in two the northern part the northern kingdom confusingly continued to be called Israel and the southern kingdom was called Judah so when we have this extended metaphor of these two sisters faithless Israel treacherous Judah it's talking about the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom after Israel split in two what happened to Israel well verse six to eight have you seen what she did that faithless one Israel how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree and there played the whore and I thought after she has done all this she'll return to me but she did not return and her treacherous sister

Judah saw it she saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one Israel I had sent her away with a decree of divorce Israel was faithless in Jeremiah day Israel was overthrown by the Assyrian empire the people of Israel were deported and Israel the northern kingdom ceased to exist as a geopolitical entity other people were moved into the land it was effectively wiped out as a nation but what about Judah the southern kingdom where Jeremiah lived well verse 8 you know she'd seen what happened to Israel and yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear but she too went and played the whore committing adultery Indeed

God goes on to make the shocking claim in verse 11 faithless Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah the people that had already been wiped out by the Assyrians God said are better than you who remain from verse 12 to the end of the chapter God continues to rebuke Judah but he does it in a kind of strange way verse 12 God says to Jeremiah go and proclaim these words toward the north and say return faithless Israel declares so proclaim these words towards the north so from Jerusalem from Judah Jeremiah is facing north toward Israel and proclaiming God's message to Israel that northern kingdom that's no longer there you with me but he's doing it in

Jerusalem so that actually the people who are listening to this proclamation to Israel are Judah for hearing the message the prophecy that Jeremiah is saying to Israel and it and what God says to Israel is return it would be a bit like to give you a trivial illustration like if I had sent my eldest daughter Hannah to her room for answering back and being disobedient perish the thought and you know I've sent her off to her room and then Evie my second daughter has seen that take place and then she starts behaving even worse and so I say right Evie you go to your room Hannah you can come back you know that's kind of what's going on here in chapter three but the message that Judah hear God proclaiming to the north Jeremiah proclaiming to the north is magnificent again and again the

[39:01] Lord calls faithless Israel to return now we can't look at all the details but I want to point out the main features first the basis of God's call to Israel to return is God's own character look at verse 12 return faithless Israel declares the Lord I will not look on you in anger for I am merciful declares the Lord the basis of the call to return is the mercy of God his grace his faithful love to his people brothers sisters that is the grounds on which we may confidently hope to be welcomed back by God we have no right to expect that God would take us back and yet he will because of who he himself is return for I am merciful declares the

Lord second observation the condition of return the basis of return is God's character his mercy his grace the condition of return is confession verse 13 only acknowledge your guilt that you've rebelled against the Lord your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree and that you've not obeyed my voice declares the Lord says return only acknowledge your guilt confess your sin confess your idolatry we cannot come back to the Lord in pride we only have ourselves to blame for our estrangement we only have God to thank for our restoration if we say we have no sin

we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us but if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness the only way back to God is through God's faithful love and through our humble confession third observation the outcome of return is complete restoration complete restoration I mean let's let's fly through some verses that we'd love to spend more time on but we won't but we'll fly through them and just try and try and soak them up verse 14 return o faithless children declares the Lord for I am your master I'll take you one from a city and two from a family and I'll bring you to Zion and I will give you shepherds after my own heart who will feed you with knowledge and understanding and when you've multiplied and increased in the land in those days declares the Lord they shall no more say the ark of the covenant of the Lord it shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed it shall not be made again what's going on there well there's an allusion there to a new covenant God's going to make when I bring you back the Lord says you're not going to be talking about the ark of the old covenant this is a new I'm doing something new a new covenant!

Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord and all nations shall gather to it to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart in those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage Judah and Israel restored the nations coming in the presence of God people's hearts changed the pleasant land their heritage restored complete restoration if you've seen the movie love actually you'll remember a scene towards the end of the movie where Karen who is played by

[43:30] Emma Thompson confronts her husband Harry played by Alan Rickman about Harry's unfaithfulness she's discovered that he has been unfaithful and she confronts him about it and Emma Thompson says to Alan Rickman when she confronts him she poses him the question that she's now asking herself would you stay knowing that life would always be a little bit worse or would you cut and run see after that great betrayal of their marriage she says even if some reconciliation!

may be possible life would always be a little bit worse life will forever be a little bit worse she says there can be no complete restoration that the past cannot be undone the stain can never be fully taken away a shadow always remains life would always be a little bit worse but that's not how it is with God the restoration promised here is complete and full and perfect there's no shame or grief to dull its glory the people are fully turned to God verse 22 return faithless sons I will heal your faithlessness behold we come to you for you are the Lord our God the people are fully turned to God God is fully turned to his people verse 12

I will not look on you in anger for I am merciful I will not be angry forever even to the extent that Israel is vocation and high calling would be fulfilled to bring blessing to the nations we saw the nations coming in chapter 4 verse 1 if you return Israel declares the Lord to me you should return if you remove your detestable things from my presence and do not waver and if you swear as the Lord lives in truth in justice and in righteousness then nations shall bless themselves in him in the Lord and in him shall they glory Israel's calling to be a blessing to the nations would be fulfilled now all of this was dramatically proclaimed in Judah to the north towards Israel but it was heard in Judah and in Jeremiah's day the point was

Judah you've heard God's promise and call and invitation to Israel what about you Judah and Jerusalem what are you going to do chapter 4 verse 3 for thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns circumcise yourself to the Lord remove the foreskin of your hearts O men of Judah and inhabitants!

of Jerusalem lest my wrath go forth like a fire and burn with none to quench it Jerusalem what will you do will you return we saw that this word of the Lord came in the days of King Josiah and you may be familiar with the reign of King Josiah or you may not but the thing about King Josiah is he kind of stands out in the line of Judah's kings as a bit of an exception a bit of a shining light and at the very time as Jeremiah was proclaiming this word of the Lord the king was also attempting to lead a national spiritual revival six years before Jeremiah was commissioned we're told in second chronicles Josiah himself began to seek the

[47:45] Lord two years before Jeremiah was commissioned Josiah began to purge Judah of idols four years after Jeremiah's commission Josiah began to repair the temple and found the book of the law and restored some of

the religious calendar of Judah the question for Judah though was as both king and prophet sought to lead the nation in returning to the Lord the question for Judah was how wide and how deep would this return be how wide would it go would it extend from the king throughout the kingdom how long would it last would it continue into the next generation how deep would it be would it go to the heart!

tense conflicted atmosphere of our society political atmosphere of our society at present there is among many a sense of nostalgia there is in our society in some corners a resurgent conservatism even at some places a form of Christian nationalism we're seeing the rise in the profile of a political party like One Nation there is among many in our country a pining for liberal democracy for western ideals for traditional family values for cohesive community life with shared values and a sense that that might be being eroded and so there are calls in our society to return to the way things once were but look at what

God says he says in verse one if you return O Israel to me you should return what God calls us to is not to return to conservatism or to the traditions of western civilization or to religion he calls us to return to him to him to the Lord our God and we who still need to hear the warning little children keep yourselves from idols we also need to hear the call if you return then to me you must return we brothers and sisters need to be people who constantly turn to the

Lord to him daily weekly continually even habitually but from the heart together individually turning to the Lord our God for he is good he has been good to us and he is our supreme unrivaled glory if you return return to me will you pray with me heavenly father you have been so good to us how can we thank you for all that you have done for us through your son!

no words or praise are ever sufficient and above all you have made us your own precious people your children you have given us yourself even your spirit dwelling with us!

[52:24] Lord you are our supreme glory Father please keep our hearts turning to you please save us from idols our world is full of idols and we feel their allure but Lord we ask by your mercy that you would keep turning us to you for we know in your grace you will have us back in Jesus name Amen