

For Further Discussion of Jeremiah 2-6

These questions are designed to help you further understand and apply Sunday's teaching from this passage. If you weren't able to hear in on Sunday be sure to listen to it online (www.efreedb.org).

A brief synopsis of what's taking place in Judah?

Jeremiah lived during a time of incredible and terrible transition. Just over a century prior to the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry King Ahaz, against the clear council of the prophet Isaiah, foolishly sought the military aid of powerful Assyria when threatened with attacked from Northern Israel and Damascus. Assyria responded, conquered Judah's foes, and Judah came under their control. As a vassal, Judah was required to pay tribute and recognize the Assyrian gods in the Jerusalem temple. Four kings and a hundred years later Assyrian power was on a rapid decline and a new, young king, Josiah, took advantage to reclaim Judah and even parts of Israel, including the restoration of the long-ignored temple. By this time in Judah's history idol worship was the way of life throughout the land, thanks in part to the aggressive promotion of foreign gods by his grandfather, Manasseh. But in Josiah's twelfth year on the throne the Book of the Law was found, and after reading it, Josiah championed an aggressive religious reformation. He set out to remove every form of pagan worship in the land (idols, altars, and priests), reestablish the sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem, and reinstate the Passover celebration. It was during this time that Jeremiah began his ministry. But Josiah's reforms, while affecting the landscape of Israel, couldn't change the people's heart. They had grown to love the idolatrous ways under Manasseh, and when Josiah died the nation quickly turned to these old, and all too familiar evil ways.

Breakdown of Jeremiah 2-6:

2:1-3:5 – God exposes Judah's evil.

"Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, ¹³ 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." (2:12-13)

"...they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, 'Arise and save us!' ²⁸ But where are your gods that you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah." (2:27-28)

3:6-4:31 – God calls Judah to repent and warns them of the coming judgment if they don't.

"If you return, O Israel, declares the LORD, to Me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver, ² and if you swear, 'As the LORD lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."³ For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. ⁴ Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest My wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds." (4:1-4)

5:1-6:30 – Judah fails to recognize her sin and stubbornly refuses to change, to which God pronounces judgment.

"Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her. ² Though they say, 'As the LORD lives,' yet they swear falsely. ³ O LORD, do not Your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; You have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent." (5:1-3)

Observation/Interpretation/Application Questions:

Be sure to read all of Jeremiah 2 (I suggest reading it in the New Living Translation) and then answer the following questions.

1. Read **Jeremiah 2:7**. In the first part of the verse identify what good thing did God give to Israel as well as the reason the text says God gave it to them?

In the second half of the verse what is Israel accused of doing with this gift? (Use what you gleaned from reading the whole chapter to answer this.) Notice the twice-used possessive pronoun in this half of the verse. Whose is the real owner of this gift?

Take some time to share with the other members of the group what good things has God given to you? What is the purpose for Him giving you these? Answer this question in light of **Matthew 25:14-29**.

2. A 'god' is anything (person, object, or idea) one puts their trust in, anchors their hope on, and sets their affection/desire on for their security, joy, identity, refuge, provision, or well-being. What do you need in your life to feel secure, joyful, safe, etc.? How do you respond when you don't have that thing?

Read the following passages and discuss how each contributes to the discussion above. What does each passage say about God and what does it imply about those things you 'need'?

- **Psalm 56:1-4**
- **Jeremiah 14:22**
- **Psalm 73:25**
- **John 14:1**
- **2 Corinthians 1:10**
- **Matthew 22:37-38**
- **James 1:16-17**

What action will you take this week in relation to what you've identified above so that it won't have the idolatrous prominence it's had to this point?

3. From the language God uses in chapter 2 to speak of Israel (vss. 2-4 & 32) and the way He sees their sin (vss. 20-25 also 3:1), how would you describe the nature of God's relationship with Israel? In light of this discuss how this informs the extreme response to a seemingly frivolous relationship spoken of in James 4:4.

According to James 4:1-3 what are the practical indicators that we are in danger of committing this idolatrous offense against God?