

## “Broken Cisterns that Can Hold No Water”

### Introduction:

1. Unlike most people whose names grace the pages of the Bible, I have had very little experiences with cisterns, or underground storage tanks, built by man, and which served as artificial reservoirs for storing water. The one experience I have had with a cistern occurred in 1972 while I was in a Gospel Meeting in Cob Hill, KY., an experience which I continue to remember but do not want to duplicate (explain).
2. But cisterns were common in Bible lands and in Bible days. They served a very useful purpose in areas where a consistent water supply was lacking and made it possible for water to be stored for use during times when the rainfall was little or virtually none existent.
  - a. Archeologists have uncovered hundreds and hundreds of ancient cisterns in Bible lands which have been excavated.
  - b. There were times when it was a blessing to have a cistern. 2 Chron. 26:9-10 (“*hewed out many cisterns,*” RSV). 2 Kings 18:31.
3. But cisterns, important as they were, had their disadvantages.
  - a. Over time they would tend to crack and leak.
  - b. They also served as a gathering place for mosquitoes, worms, snakes, and bugs! I much prefer to be able to turn the faucet and receive an endless supply of good water, minus the mosquitoes, worms, snakes & bugs.
  - c. Basically, people needed cisterns when there was no fresh water to drink.
4. “*Cisterns,*” the word, is used in two senses in the Bible.
  - a. Literal, as in 2 Kings 18:31.
  - b. Figurative, or metaphorical, as in:
    - (1) Prov. 5:15-18.
    - (2) Jeremiah 2:13, “*hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*”
5. Lesson Title: “broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

### Discussion:

#### I. Background of the Text and Context.

- A. This verse describes the actions of the people of Judah, during the times of Jeremiah, a prophet.
- B. Facts about Jeremiah.
  1. Has been described as “a broken hearted prophet with a heart-breaking message.”
  2. He labored as a prophet from the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Josiah to the 11<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah, roughly from around 627 to 580 B.C., Jer. 1:3.
  3. He was highly sensitive, Jer. 9:1.
  4. “He combines the tenderness of Hosea, the fearlessness of Amos, the stern majesty of Isaiah,” Hertz.
- C. Consider the times Politically.
  1. After the division of the kingdom, I Kings 12.
  2. After the Assyrian captivity of the Northern kingdom, Israel, 2 Kings 17.
  3. It was before (and during) the Babylonian Captivity of Judah.
  4. A time of political instability. Judah, reduced to a petty state, was caught in a death struggle between the superpowers, Egypt and Babylon.
- D. Consider the Times Morally and Spiritually.
  1. Idolatry was rampant, Jer. 7:30-31.
  2. The people were backsliders, Jer. 8:5.
  3. The people were guilty of murder, adultery, swearing, burning incense unto Baal, Jer. 7:9.
  4. Deceit and lying were common place, Jer. 9:3-6.
  5. And their leaders were unconcerned! Jer. 10:21.

#### II. Examine the Text, Jer. 2:11-13:

- A. “*My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit,*” v. 11.
  1. Unlike the pagan nations around them which remained true to their gods (idols), God’s people had forsaken Him, and “*changed their glory for that which*” did not profit (v.10-11).
- B. God’s people had “*Committed two evils;*” they had:
  1. Forsaken God “*the fountain of living waters,*” and
  2. “*Hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,*” v. 13.
- C. God was Israel’s “*fountain of living waters,*” v. 13. He had:
  1. Delivered Israel from the land of Egypt, Jer. 2:6.
  2. Let them through the wilderness, Jer. 2:6, preserving them against all odds.
  3. Had brought them into “*a plentiful country,*” Jer. 2:7.

4. Even so, God's people, beginning with their leaders, turned away from God!
  - a. The priests did not say "*where is the Lord*," Jer. 2:8.
  - b. Those who handled the Law did not know God, 2:8.
  - c. The pastors (rulers) transgressed against God, 2:8.
  - d. The prophets "*prophesied by Baal*," 2:8.
  - e. Summed up, they had:
    - (1) Forsaken God, "*the fountain of living waters*", 2:13.
    - (2) Hewed out "*broken cisterns that can hold no water*," 2:13.

- D. And they suffered the dire consequences! Gal. 6:7.
  1. They were carried away into Babylonian captivity, 2 Kings 25; 2 Chron. 36; Jeremiah 52.
  2. They had experienced God's goodness; now they began to experience His severity. Rom. 11:22.

### III. Application for Us. Note Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,10,12.

- A. Jesus is our Fountain of living waters, John 4:9,10,13-14; John 7:37-38; Zech. 13:1; 14:8.
  1. This "*fountain*" was opened up on the day of Pentecost, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:41,47.
  2. The church Jesus said "*I will build*," Matt. 16:18, came into existence, "*the saved*" were added to it, and multiplied thousands were able to drink of the fountain of life as the terms of salvation were proclaimed and promptly obeyed.
    - a. In one generation, that life-giving word was proclaimed throughout the world, Col. 1:23,
- B. However, men began to hew out "*broken cisterns*!"
  1. Acts 20:28-30; 2 Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1-3.
- C. "*Broken fountains*" in the form of churches built by men, not by Jesus! Matt. 15:13.
  1. A study of "church history" since the close of the Bible records:
    - a. The rise of Roman Catholicism, with the "bishop" at Rome being declared "Pope" in 606 A.D.
    - b. The rise of human denominations, so that now there are literally thousands of denominations built by men.
- D. "*Broken fountains*" in the form of false doctrines developed by men.
  1. 2 Peter 2:1; I John 4:1.
  2. Some people following error have been deceived by others, Matt. 7:15,
  3. Some people follow error because they do not want the truth, 2 Thess. 2:10-12; I John 4:6.
 

a.cf. A.T. Robertson, in his **Grammar of the Greek New Testament**, asserted that there are times when "grammar must yield to theology," p. 389. However, the grammar is inspired; one's "theology" is not!
- E. Other "*Broken Cisterns*" which can hold "*no water*," and provide no lasting satisfaction.
  1. Atheism!
    - a. To be an atheist is to be a "*fool*!" Psalm 14:1; Rom. 1:20. But multitudes subscribe to this ism, one which provides no comfort, no peace of mind, no hope of eternal life; only gloom, doom, and desperation.
  2. Human Philosophy, Col. 2:8.
  3. Other "*Broken Cisterns*," which men have hewed out.
    - a. Pleasure, Luke 8:14; Heb. 11:25.
    - b. Money, Luke 12:15; Matt. 16:26.
    - c. Immorality – that is what people turn to when they turn from God, Rom. 1:20-32.
    - d. One Chaplain summed up "broken cisterns" under the acronym SAM, which stands for Sex (illicit), Alcohol, and Materialism.

### IV. We must turn from these "*broken Cisterns*," and turn back to Jesus!

- A. He is that "*fountain of living water*," John 4:10,14.
- B. He promises us that "*water of life*" that flows forth from the throne of God, Rev. 22:1,.

### Conclusion:

1. Israel had her broken cisterns that could hold no water. They experienced death, destruction, and captivity.
2. Many today are hewing out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.
3. Are we guilty of doing the same today?
4. We must turn from the "*broken cisterns*" of men and turn to that thirst-quenching "*fountain of living water*," Rev. 22:17.

--Bobby Witherington, July 29, 2016