



Study 7 : "Rejecting The Living Water" (Jeremiah 2:11-19) Sunday, October 18, 2009 BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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Introducing the Study

WATER : A POWERFUL OLD TESTAMENT SYMBOL

The Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River were the only natural sources of fresh water in ancient Israel. In some places wells could be dug - and cisterns were constructed, often deep underground, to store rainwater. The water quality in them was often poor and they were rarely water tight.

Water is essential to life. As natural water sources were limited, finding water was a constant concern. The search for it became a symbol of our need of a living RELATIONSHIP with God:

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you,
my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. **Psalm 63:1**

Water also became a symbol of all that God would freely SUPPLY by his grace:

"The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs. **Isaiah 41:17-18**

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy ... without cost.

Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. **from Isaiah 55:1-3**

As opposed to the "dead" (polluted, brackish) water in man-constructed cisterns, Biblical writers used the symbol of "LIVING" water for this God-given provision of life:

the LORD, the spring of living water. **Jeremiah 17:13**

The prophets were not just speaking of God supplying our physical necessities; ONLY in him, and through him, can the deepest longings and needs of the human heart be met:

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. **Isaiah 44:3**

How priceless is your unfailing love!

Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. **Psalm 36:7-9**

THE BASIC PROPOSITION

Behind this symbolism is this one basic proposition about our human natures:

1. We were created in the IMAGE of God

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness ... in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **Genesis 1:26-27**

2. We were created for FELLOWSHIP with God

In common with all other living things we were created from the "dust of the ground," but unlike all other living things, we can never be truly satisfied by just the things of the earth. We humans have a unique SPIRITUAL dimension that can only be at peace when we are at peace with God.

The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. **Genesis 2:7**

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" **Genesis 3:8-9**

A. A FOOLISH SUBSTITUTION

My people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. **Jeremiah 2:11-13**

If we are made in God's image and made for fellowship with God, then that "spiritual dimension" of our make-up CANNOT be satisfied by anything else. Any attempt to do so is futile.

Jeremiah accuses the people of Israel of turning their backs on God - the "spring of living water" and turning to MAN-MADE substitutes - "broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

In Scriptures that speak of "living water" the Prophets identified 3 main "substitutes" for a living relationship with God:

B. SUBSTITUTE 1 : A DIY SPIRITUALITY

"What fault did your fathers find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves ... my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. **Jeremiah 2:5 &13** (see also 2 Kings 17:7-23)

You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree; you sacrifice your children in the ravines and under the overhanging crags. **Isaiah 57:5**

The carpenter ... fashions a god and worships it ... he prays to it and says, "Save me; you are my god." They know nothing, they understand nothing. **from Isaiah 44:14-18**

"Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world **Paul in Acts 17:22-31**

C. SUBSTITUTE 2 : POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Shihor ? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the River ? **Jeremiah 2:18**

The history of the Kings of Israel and Judah is complete with political intrigue as they played diplomatic games and entered into political alliances in order to try and stand against the might of the two major power blocks of the time - Egypt and Assyria. (See 2 Kings 17:1-6, for example) The prophets message:

"If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all." **Isaiah 7:9** (The prophet to King Ahaz, in fear of his life as a group of surrounding small nations go to war against him in an attempt to force Judah to join them in a coalition against Assyria in 734/5 BC)

(The problem is not political involvement as such, but the belief that "politics" can solve all our problems and politicians can be our "saviours.")

D SUBSTITUTE 3 : MATERIALISM

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; ... Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy?" **Isaiah 55:1-2**

The LORD ... looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field ... **Isaiah 5:7-8**

E. A NEW TESTAMENT PARALLEL

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." **John 4:10**

Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. **John 7:37**

"It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. **Rev 21:6**