

Week 2: The word of fire against idolatry – Jeremiah 2-6

Pray for our mission partners and your time in the Word

Context (Deuteronomy)

1. What do you remember from the sermon on Sunday?

This week we will be looking at God's judgment on his people who have forsaken him for idols. Deuteronomy gives the background for God's covenant with his people.

2. Read Deuteronomy 29:16-21, this describes living as God's people, what is the result of idolatry (i.e. forsaking God for other gods)?

***Note:** this study we will be reading large sections of poetry rather than investigating a specific passage. So it is helpful to treat this study like a reflection (like a reflection on a sermon at church).*

Notice

Read Jeremiah 2:1-13

3. Re-read the passage on your own

Prompts for reading on own

- Images/metaphors
- Keywords or ideas
- Questions you have

4. Share with a partner, what images had an impact on you?
5. Discuss all together,
 - a. What are you unsure about?
 - b. What do you think the passage is about?

Guided study

Vs: 1-4, What are some of the images that describe God's relationship with his people?

Vs: 5-13,
How does the image of God as a husband and Israel as his bride affect the way we hear the questions he asks?

What is God's case against the people of Jerusalem?

In groups each read one of the following passages Group 1: Read Jeremiah 3:6-13 Group 2: Read Jeremiah 4:1-8 Group 3: Read Jeremiah 6:9-20 Have each group summarise the message spoken by the prophet.	Prompts for further discussion Is there any hope in his message? What does the message expose about the people's attitude to God?
Reflect	
6. As a group, - What are some life lessons? - What do these chapters teach about God? - Resolve what you think the main message	Guided study <i>if needed</i> What do these passages teach about learning from past mistakes? What causes spiritual decline in God's people? What does this teach about the kind of relationship God wants with his people? What is the problem of forsaking God for idols?
Respond	
7. What kind of impact should it have? On - What you believe - What you want in life - What you do this week	How does Jesus make this kind of relationship possible (see Rom 5:8-11)? How does this bleak picture of sin help us appreciate God's love for the sinner even more? Is there something that we need to repent of? (idols, prayerlessness, pride, and selfishness)
Pray in response to the passage, then in pairs	

MP: God's word of judgement against Judah because of their love of idols and refusal to repent.

App: A reminder to take the relationship we have with God seriously by repenting of sin and gratitude for Jesus.

Deuteronomy 29:16-20

¹⁶ You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. ¹⁷ You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. ¹⁸ Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose **heart** turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

¹⁹ When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way," they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. ²⁰ **The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them,** and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven.

Jeremiah 2:1-13

2 The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem:

“This is what the LORD says:

“I remember the devotion of your youth,
how as a bride you loved me
and followed me through the wilderness,
through a land not sown.

3

Israel was holy to the LORD,
the firstfruits of his harvest;
all who devoured her were held guilty,
and disaster overtook them,”
declares the LORD.

4

Hear the word of the LORD, you descendants of Jacob,
all you clans of Israel.

⁵ This is what the LORD says:

“What fault did your ancestors find in me,
that they strayed so far from me?
They followed worthless idols
and became worthless themselves.

6

They did not ask, ‘Where is the LORD,
who brought us up out of Egypt
and led us through the barren wilderness,
through a land of deserts and ravines,
a land of drought and utter darkness,
a land where no one travels and no one lives?’

7

I brought you into a fertile land
to eat its fruit and rich produce.
But you came and defiled my land

and made my inheritance detestable.

8

The priests did not ask,

‘Where is the LORD?’

Those who deal with the law did not know me;

the leaders rebelled against me.

The prophets prophesied by Baal,

following worthless idols.

9

“Therefore I bring charges against you again,”

declares the LORD.

“And I will bring charges against your children’s children.

10

Cross over to the coasts of Cyprus and look,

send to Kedar^[a] and observe closely;

see if there has ever been anything like this:

11

Has a nation ever changed its gods?

(Yet they are not gods at all.)

But my people have exchanged their glorious God

for worthless idols.

12

Be appalled at this, you heavens,

and shudder with great horror,”

declares the LORD.

13

“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 3:6-13

⁶ During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, "Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. ⁷ I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. ⁸ I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. ⁹ Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. ¹⁰ In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense," declares the LORD.

¹¹ The LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah. ¹² Go, proclaim this message toward the north:

"Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD,
'I will frown on you no longer,
for I am faithful,' declares the LORD,
'I will not be angry forever.

13

Only acknowledge your guilt—
you have rebelled against the LORD your God,
you have scattered your favors to foreign gods
under every spreading tree,
and have not obeyed me,"
declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 4:1-8

"If you, Israel, will return,
then return to me,"

declares the LORD.

"If you put your detestable idols out of my sight
and no longer go astray,

2

and if in a truthful, just and righteous way
you swear, 'As surely as the LORD lives,'
then the nations will invoke blessings by him
and in him they will boast."

³ This is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and to Jerusalem:

"Break up your unplowed ground
and do not sow among thorns.

4

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
circumcise your hearts,
you people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
or my wrath will flare up and burn like fire
because of the evil you have done—
burn with no one to quench it.

5

"Announce in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem and say:
'Sound the trumpet throughout the land!'

Cry aloud and say:

'Gather together!

Let us flee to the fortified cities!'

6

Raise the signal to go to Zion!
Flee for safety without delay!
For I am bringing disaster from the north,
even terrible destruction."

A lion has come out of his lair;
a destroyer of nations has set out.
He has left his place

to lay waste your land.
Your towns will lie in ruins
without inhabitant.

8

So put on sackcloth,
lament and wail,
for the fierce anger of the LORD
has not turned away from us.

Jeremiah 6:9-19

⁹ This is what the LORD Almighty says:

“Let them glean the remnant of Israel
as thoroughly as a vine;
pass your hand over the branches again,
like one gathering grapes.”

¹⁰ To whom can I speak and give warning?
Who will listen to me?
Their ears are closed^[a]
so they cannot hear.
The word of the LORD is offensive to them;
they find no pleasure in it.

¹¹

But I am full of the wrath of the LORD,
and I cannot hold it in.

“Pour it out on the children in the street
and on the young men gathered together;
both husband and wife will be caught in it,
and the old, those weighed down with years.

¹²

Their houses will be turned over to others,
together with their fields and their wives,
when I stretch out my hand
against those who live in the land,”
declares the LORD.

¹³

“From the least to the greatest,
all are greedy for gain;
prophets and priests alike,
all practice deceit.

¹⁴

**They dress the wound of my people
as though it were not serious.
‘Peace, peace,’ they say,
when there is no peace.**

¹⁵

Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct?
No, they have no shame at all;
they do not even know how to blush.
So they will fall among the fallen;
they will be brought down when I punish them,"
says the LORD.

¹⁶ This is what the LORD says:

"Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.
But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'

¹⁷

I appointed watchmen over you and said,
'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!'
But you said, 'We will not listen.'

¹⁸

Therefore hear, you nations;
you who are witnesses,
observe what will happen to them.

¹⁹

Hear, you earth:
I am bringing disaster on this people,
the fruit of their schemes,
because they have not listened to my words
and have rejected my law.

App:

Life lessons (learn from the past how to ruin spiritual health)

1. Trade your confidence in God for lame substitutes
2. Resist what God calls us to repent of
3. Make light of the judgment to come (**selective hearing**)

God lessons

- God is after a covenant relationship with us, which means exclusive

Bigger picture

- Christ died for us while we were in the bed with idols
- He fixed the relationship with God while we were his enemies

Show be great gratitude for christ love

1. Jeremiah 2-6, essentially plays out Deuteronomy 29

Deuteronomy 29:16-20

¹⁶You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. ¹⁷You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. ¹⁸Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose **heart** turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

¹⁹When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way," they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. ²⁰**The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them,** and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven.

2. Notice the images, and how they describe God's relationship with his people

Notes:

What Israel was to God (a bride)

"This is what the LORD says:

"I remember the devotion of your youth,
how as a bride you loved me
and followed me through the wilderness,
through a land not sown.

3

Israel was holy to the LORD,
the firstfruits of his harvest;
all who devoured her were held guilty,
and disaster overtook them,"
declares the LORD.

The cry of a loving husband

"What fault did your ancestors find in me,
that they strayed so far from me?
They followed worthless idols
and became worthless themselves.

Has a nation ever changed its gods?

(Yet they are not gods at all.)

**But my people have exchanged their glorious God
for worthless idols.**

Now why go to Egypt

to drink water from the Nile^[b]?

And why go to Assyria

to drink water from the Euphrates?

The Case for divorce

But my people have exchanged their glorious God
for worthless idols.

....

"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.

....

Your wickedness will punish you;
your backsliding will rebuke you.
Consider then and realize
how evil and bitter it is for you
when you forsake the LORD your God
and have no awe of me,"
declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

Group 1: Read Jeremiah 3:1-13

Jeremiah 3 Repentance would have led to forgiveness, but they don't

¹⁰ In spite of all this, **her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart**, but only in pretense," declares the LORD.

¹¹ The LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah. ¹² Go, proclaim this message toward the north:

"Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD,
'I will frown on you no longer,
for I am faithful,' declares the LORD,
'I will not be angry forever.

Group 2: Read Jeremiah 4:1-8

Message 1, From Jeremiah

⁶ Raise the signal to go to Zion!
Flee for safety without delay!
For I am bringing disaster from the north,
even terrible destruction."

Group 3: Read Jeremiah 6:9-20

Message 2, From the people

¹⁴ They dress the wound of my people
as though it were not serious.

**'Peace, peace,' they say,
when there is no peace.**

Jeremiah 2:1-13

2 The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Go and proclaim in **the hearing of Jerusalem:**

“This is what the LORD says:

“I remember the devotion of your youth,
how as a bride you loved me
and followed me through the wilderness,
through a land not sown.

3

Israel was holy to the LORD,
the firstfruits of his harvest;
all who devoured her were held guilty,
and disaster overtook them,”
declares the LORD.

4

Hear the word of the LORD, you **descendants of Jacob,**
all you **clans of Israel.**

⁵This is what the LORD says:

“What fault did your ancestors find in me,
that they strayed so far from me?
They followed worthless idols
and became worthless themselves.

6

They did not ask, ‘Where is the LORD,
who brought us up out of Egypt
and led us through the barren wilderness,
through a land of deserts and ravines,
a land of drought and utter darkness,
a land where no one travels and no one lives?’

7

I brought you into a fertile land
to eat its fruit and rich produce.
But you came and defiled my land
and made my inheritance detestable.

8

The **priests** did not ask,
'Where is the LORD?'
Those who deal with the law did not know me;
the leaders rebelled against me.
The **prophets** prophesied by Baal,
following worthless idols.

9

"Therefore I bring charges against you again,"
declares the LORD.
"And I will bring charges against your children's children.

10

Cross over to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar^[a] and observe closely;
see if there has ever been anything like this:

11

Has a nation ever changed its gods?
(Yet they are not gods at all.)
But my people have exchanged their glorious God
for worthless idols.

12

Be appalled at this, you heavens,
and shudder with great horror,"
declares the LORD.

13

**"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.**

14

Is Israel a servant, a slave by birth?
Why then has he become plunder?

15

Lions have roared;
they have growled at him.
They have laid waste his land;
his towns are burned and deserted.

16

Also, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes
have cracked your skull.

17

Have you not brought this on yourselves
by forsaking the LORD your God
when he led you in the way?

18

Now why go to Egypt
to drink water from the Nile^[b]?
And why go to Assyria
to drink water from the Euphrates?

19

Your wickedness will punish you;
your backsliding will rebuke you.

Consider then and realize
how evil and bitter it is for you
when you forsake the LORD your God
and have no awe of me,"
declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

Jeremiah 3:1-13

"If a man divorces his wife
and she leaves him and marries another man,
should he return to her again?
Would not the land be completely defiled?
But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers—
would you now return to me?"
declares the LORD.

2

"Look up to the barren heights and see.
Is there any place where you have not been ravished?
By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers,
sat like a nomad in the desert.
You have defiled the land
with your prostitution and wickedness.

3

Therefore the showers have been withheld,
and no spring rains have fallen.
Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute;
you refuse to blush with shame.

4

Have you not just called to me:
'My Father, my friend from my youth,

5

will you always be angry?
Will your wrath continue forever?'
This is how you talk,
but you do all the evil you can."

⁶ During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, "Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. ⁷ I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. ⁸ I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. ⁹ Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. ¹⁰ In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense," declares the LORD.

¹¹ The LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah. ¹² Go, proclaim this message toward the north:

"Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD,
'I will frown on you no longer,
for I am faithful,' declares the LORD,
'I will not be angry forever.

13

Only acknowledge your guilt—
you have rebelled against the LORD your God,
you have scattered your favors to foreign gods
under every spreading tree,
and have not obeyed me,"
declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 4:1-8

"If you, Israel, will return,
then return to me,"

declares the LORD.

"If you put your detestable idols out of my sight
and no longer go astray,

2

and if in a truthful, just and righteous way
you swear, 'As surely as the LORD lives,'
then the nations will invoke blessings by him
and in him they will boast."

³ This is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and to Jerusalem:

"Break up your unplowed ground
and do not sow among thorns.

4

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
circumcise your hearts,
you people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
or my wrath will flare up and burn like fire
because of the evil you have done—
burn with no one to quench it.

5

"Announce in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem and say:
'Sound the trumpet throughout the land!'
Cry aloud and say:
'Gather together!
Let us flee to the fortified cities!'

6

Raise the signal to go to Zion!
Flee for safety without delay!
**For I am bringing disaster from the north,
even terrible destruction."**

A lion has come out of his lair;
a destroyer of nations has set out.
He has left his place
to lay waste your land.
Your towns will lie in ruins
without inhabitant.

8

So put on sackcloth,
lament and wail,
for the fierce anger of the LORD
has not turned away from us.

Jeremiah 6:9-20

⁹ This is what the LORD Almighty says:

“Let them glean the remnant of Israel
as thoroughly as a vine;
pass your hand over the branches again,
like one gathering grapes.”

10

**To whom can I speak and give warning?
Who will listen to me?
Their ears are closed^[a]
so they cannot hear.
The word of the LORD is offensive to them;
they find no pleasure in it.**

11

But I am full of the wrath of the LORD,
and I cannot hold it in.

“Pour it out on the children in the street
and on the young men gathered together;
both husband and wife will be caught in it,
and the old, those weighed down with years.

12

Their houses will be turned over to others,
together with their fields and their wives,
when I stretch out my hand
against those who live in the land,"
declares the LORD.

13

"From the least to the greatest,
all are greedy for gain;
prophets and priests alike,
all practice deceit.

14

They dress the wound of my people
as though it were not serious.
'Peace, peace,' they say,
when there is no peace.

15

Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct?
No, they have no shame at all;
they do not even know how to blush.
So they will fall among the fallen;
they will be brought down when I punish them,"
says the LORD.

¹⁶ This is what the LORD says:

"Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.
But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'

17

I appointed watchmen over you and said,
 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!'
But you said, 'We will not listen.'

18

Therefore hear, you nations;
 you who are witnesses,
 observe what will happen to them.

19

Hear, you earth:
 I am bringing disaster on this people,
 the fruit of their schemes,
because they have not listened to my words
 and have rejected my law.

20

What do I care about incense from Sheba
 or sweet calamus from a distant land?
Your burnt offerings are not acceptable;
 your sacrifices do not please me."