

TITLE: “STOP DIGGING WELLS!”

TEXT: JEREMIAH 2:12-13

THESIS: To encourage the church to rely on God to bless our congregation and to provide the increase (requires faith & obedience).

INTRO: We're thankful for all of God's blessings. We're thankful for the **rain** He blessed us with recently. The drought has reminded us of how much we need the rain. I've prayed for rain more times over the last year than ever in my life, but I've also thanked God for the rain we've received more than ever. God is the provider of rain (**Mt 5:45- He sends his rain on the just and the unjust**). The need for rain ought to be a reminder to us of our need for God. This was true in OT times as well.

I. BACKGROUND (v. 1-11):

- A. **Lev 26:3-4** – “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.”
1. IF you keep my commandment... God's promises are always conditioned upon our obedience.
 2. I will give you rain (water for drinking and for crops – food). This thing we need so badly, God has promised to provide.
 3. When? In due season (i.e., when it's needed- the right amount). Who knows better about this than God?
- B. (**Jer 2:1-3**) God remembers the “good times.” But clearly in this context, these are in the past.
1. There actually had been good times of obedience in Israel's past. And surprisingly enough, it wasn't hard for them to be obedient to God (**1 John 5:3** – God's commands are not grievous!)
 2. During these good times, coincidentally, Israel was blessed beyond belief! This little nation, with *no* military background or training, defeated nations much greater than they. Eventually, they were the world power (under David & Solomon)!
 3. God's current people, the **church**, has had its good times in the past as well. We all know of how the church has fallen away today in so many places & congregations. The ones standing firm in the truth are few and far between. But 50-60 yrs ago, the church was sound and strong. It is **not** coincidental that the church then was the fastest growing religious group in the world! And it is **not** coincidental that the church today is shrinking!
- C. (**v. 4-8**) God's people had forsaken him, left him, and forgotten him.
1. (v. 5) What reason have I given you to leave? What is it about following *My* way that you think is wrong? What is it about *My* way that you can show to be unsuccessful? You've walked after vanity! You've ignored me and done things *your* way!
 2. (v. 6) My people have refused to rely on me.
 3. (v. 7) Notice the change of pronoun (“they” to “you”). Your fathers may have started it, but you've continued it! After I blessed you, you defiled my land (by your idolatry...by departing from *my* law and doing what *you* wanted)!
 4. (v. 8) You're rotten from the top down! Priests, pastors (political rulers), & prophets all failed me.
- D. (**v. 9**) Yet God still pleads with them...and with their children's children!
- E. (**v. 10-11**) Has any other nation ever left its gods (though their not even real)? It's amazing how pagan nations were more committed to their false gods than Israel was to its TRUE God! (Compare Islam & Christianity today in terms of fervor!)

II. LACK OF FAITH: An Analogy of Their Departure (v. 12-13):

- A. My people have committed **two evils** (both are because of **Lack of Faith**):
1. They have forsaken me, the fountain of **living waters**. They rejected God's perfect way (**Lev 26:3-4**). No cisterns needed!
 2. They have hewed them out cisterns, **broken cisterns**, that can hold no water! Even good cisterns held stale, stagnant water, with unwanted “additives” (bugs, dirt, etc.). And theirs were broken! Their way **WILL NOT WORK!**
- B. The church today has also committed these evils (**lack of faith**):
1. They have rejected God's perfect plan for the church (His biblical description of the church).
 2. They have made a new way (not really new...but copied from denominations). This way **WILL NOT WORK!**
 3. You've ignored me and done things *your* way! God doesn't need our help when it comes to law and instruction! He doesn't need anyone to change His ways. When we change, we depart from Him. We can't change anything & still walk w/God (**Amos 3:3** – “*can two walk together, except they be agreed?*”)
 4. When Israel departed, God said through Amos, “*I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD*” (**Amos 8:11**). In other words, “if you depart from me, I'll depart from you!”

III. WHAT MUST WE DO?:

- A. We must be committed to God's way (from Jer 2:12-13). We should never change God's instructions in order to attract people.
- B. We must be committed to the work here!
1. This includes **much** more than attendance, but **attendance** is foundational. If we don't **love God enough** to be here and learn about Him every opportunity we have, how can we teach others how to love God? If we can't even support our own brethren, how can we reach the lost? Why would anybody care about a congregation *we* don't care about?
–Love for brethren includes **praying** for them, **visiting** them, etc.
–Love for brethren means exercising **church discipline** when necessary.
 2. This includes evangelism (love for the lost). Don't think you can circumvent this part of God's system.
 3. This includes our giving. We still receive outside support!
- C. We must be committed to strengthening ourselves personally through Bible study, prayer, & attendance.
- D. We must then remember to let *God* provide the increase – **1 Cor 3:6**. The “planting” requires good soil.
In all of this, **have faith**. If we do what God says in all things, **He will bless us**. It may not be in numbers (we can only teach & encourage...it's up to the individual to respond). But you & I will be blessed. We may never get the nice church building here, but we'll get a mansion in heaven! In all these areas, we must have **faith**, & a **mind (commitment) to work** (**Neh 4:6**).

CONCLUSION: The Israelites disobeyed God, lost His blessings (rain, etc.), then, because of their unwillingness to repent, were forced to at least *try* to circumvent His way (by building cisterns). Do *we* do things like this? Are we digging wells to get around what God told us to do? Why today don't we trust Him any more than they did? God has provided a way of salvation. This way needs no additions or subtractions. Let's do things His way, and allow Him to provide the increase!