**BCM Bible Study – September 6/7, 2017**

**Israel’s covenant adultery & call to repentance [Jer 2 - 6]**

Background:

*Judah (the southern kingdom) has strayed from God for years. They are currently caught in* ***idol worship*** *at the time of Jeremiah’s prophecies, specifically worshipping the Canaanite storm god, “Baal”. Jeremiah has accepted the call as a prophet to the Judah, and is tasked with going to the people of God on God’s behalf.*

* **Read Jeremiah 2:1-8**
  + How is the relationship between Israel and God described in v. 1-3? What do you learn about God’s feelings toward Israel?
  + Verse 2 is referencing the time when the Israelites were wandering in the desert for forty years after being led out of Egypt. What do you think changed for the Israelites once they reached the promised land [**Exodus 19:1-2, Deut 2:7, Deut 8:2-3]** - why do you think it was easier for the Israelites to follow God in the wilderness, but not in the promised land? What does this tell you about human nature itself?
  + When do you find it easiest for yourself to follow God, and when do you notice your relationship with God to start to take the back burner?
  + What are some ways that we can prevent ourselves from forgetting where God has brought us to and where he’s brought us from?

***Baal worship background:*** *(mentioned in v. 8 and the main source of idolatry for the israelites)*. *Baal was the weather-god worshiped in Syria-Palestine, who had control over agriculture and fertility, rainfall and productivity. Since ancient Israel was always an agricultural society and their economic prosperity hindered on rain,, Baal worship was of unrivaled importance. Baal was localized at different shrines identified by unique names. The Baal religion highly appealed to the human sexual drive by way of ritual prostitution. Sexual behavior at the shrines was expected to cause the Baals to respond in like manner - to follow the worshipers by producing for them fertile seed and good crop. Israelites main source of economic provision was through agriculture, so they turned to baal. Worshipping baal was a way to worship money, sex and power while also being “religious.”*

* *Paul R. House (Beeson Divinity) & Robert Vasholz (Covenant Theological Seminary) taken from ESV study bible*

It’s easy to dismiss the Israelites behavior as ridiculous because they’re worshipping idols instead of the living God, yet we do similar things today. What are some “baals” that we turn to?

* **Read Jeremiah 2:9-13 & 22-25**
  + What source of imagery does Jeremiah use to describe the adulterous actions of Israel in v. 13?
    - *Palestine has three sources of water: the best is fresh running water, such as flows from a spring or stream called “living water”, next comes groundwater, such as might collect in a well; and last is runoff water collected in a cistern (a pit hewn into the limestone and plastered to prevent seepage but also tends to collect silt and mosquito larvae).* 
      * How does this information increase the metaphor for you?
  + In v. 22 the people attempt to cleanse themselves of sin through soap and lye. What actions or activities do we take part in to try to “cleanse” ourselves of sin that are ineffective?
  + Look at v. 25. Do you ever feel like it’s hopeless to love God more than you love everything else? How does the hope today look different than the hope of Judah in that day?
* **Read Jeremiah 3:11-13, Jeremiah 3:22a, Jeremiah 4:1a**
  + What is the common theme of the passages?
  + In 3:11-13, what is God’s one requirement of returning to Him?
  + Why do you think it’s important to acknowledge our guilt before God?
  + Do you find it hard to confess to the Lord? If so, why or why not?
* **Read Jeremiah 4:1-2** 
  + According to this passage, what does repentance lead to?
  + *Beyond Genesis, only four passages in the OT reference God’s original promise to Abraham.*
  + **Read Genesis 12:1-3**
  + What do you think is the significance of the Abrahamic covenant (or promise) being placed in Jeremiah alongside of repentance?
  + Does the idea of repentance change for you knowing that it could ultimately lead to nations coming to find blessing and glory in God?

***Read Jeremiah 4:5-8 & 13-18.*** *Although God gave Judah many chances, she did not heed Jeremiah’s warning to repent and return to the Lord, thus preferring false teaching to truth (ch 5 v. 10-13). God even challenged Jeremiah to find a single righteous person in Jerusalem (similar to the account with Abraham and Sodom and Gomorrah) with no positive outcome. Ultimately, chapters 5 and 6 describe the desolation and devastation that will occur in Judah because of their sin and unrepentant ways. God declares judgement on Israel through devastation from the north (ultimately Babylon would destroy Judah and take captives).*

**Conclusion:**

**Read Romans 2:4 as a large group.**

How does this passage interact with what we’ve studied today in Jeremiah?

What passages or teachings from this study stand out to you the most where you are in your life and relationship to God?

What difference does Jesus make in all of this?

**Small group pairings accountability questions:**

What idols may you be holding onto while also trying to follow God?

How can we regularly work confession into our lives to live a life of repentance?

Pray for one another

---

**Resources for additional reading:**Crossway ESV Study Bible

Zondervan NIV Study Bible

Encountering the Old Testament, Bill Arnold and Brian Beyer.