

Living Water, or Broken Cisterns?

Jer. 2:13 – “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

What is Meant by Broken cisterns?

1. Ancient Judah and Israel

God had shown himself in the wilderness as their provider of water and food, and their Rock and Deliverer. Yet they had forsaken him and gone after the gods of the surrounding nations. These idols could do nothing to help the Israelites, because they didn't even exist (except in the form of demons who inspired and received the false worship). This idolatry was likened to someone who ignores an artesian well of fresh, cool, refreshing, and healthy water, and instead chooses to make a cistern to hold dirty and stagnant runoff water, and which leaks anyway!

2. Denominational systems

Many denominations started out well, in the sense that they got hold of some aspect of truth from the Word that was either not being addressed by the existing churches, or had been twisted or perverted. These “new teachings” necessitated a division in the church (either voluntarily or involuntarily). We might say that they had gotten some “fresh water”. Unfortunately, the natural tendency of men is to latch on to that particular truth defensively, and not to continue on. Perhaps they only got part of the truth, or they so stress that one doctrine that they neglect and even resist other doctrines.

Another kind of denomination may have been born or expanded in times of revival, but over time they settle in and actually resist any further revival.

What is common in these situations is that instead of seeing God and his Word as an ever fresh source of living (fresh) water, they build cisterns (denominational walls) to preserve their precious water, and to keep out anything new, and in so doing, their water becomes stagnant, and eventually leaks out, until people realize “the cistern is empty”.

3. Individuals

Many people start out with a “salvation experience”, but they only see it as that – a single experience. God wants us to live each day by coming to the well for a fresh drink of living water, but they rest on their experience and dry up spiritually. Thirst is something that is ongoing. We can't say “I don't need water, because I drank last week.” Yet many people treat the water of life that way. “I don't need church, or fellowship, or Bible reading, or prayer – I got saved when I was younger, and I read the Bible occasionally. I am satisfied.” These people are getting no fresh water. They have made a little cistern to hold their one-time experience. How tragic, that when such people come to a major catastrophe or decision point in their life, or even death itself, they find that their cistern is dry.

Besides the broken cisterns, what else do we see in Jer. 2:13?

1. That there is a fountain of living waters (“... they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters”)

Ps. 1:3 – “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Jer. 17:7-8)

Isa. 12:2-3 – “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the LORD Yahveh is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.”

Isa. 55:1 – “Come every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

2. That God is the source of those living waters (“... they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters”)

Jer. 17:13 – “O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.”

Jn. 4:10-14 – “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. ... Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Jn. 7:37-39 – “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”

What other observations can we make about this living water?

1. It is obvious that we are not talking about physical water, but drawing our spiritual sustenance and refreshing from God himself, and not from this world.
2. Jesus says that he himself is the source of this living water (Jn. 4, 7). He is the Vine, Bread, Light, and Life.
3. He also says that his water will be in us, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is flowing out of our bellies (that is, our inmost beings), as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He doesn't want us living out of a canteen, just hoping we have enough water to get to the next oasis.
4. It is to find our satisfaction in God
 - Ps. 42:1-2 – “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”
 - Ps. 63:3 – “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.”
5. It is a fountain of LIFE
 - Jn. 4:14 – “shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”
 - Ps. 36:9 – “For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”
 - Prov. 13:14 – “The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.”
 - Prov. 14:27 – “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.”
6. To drink of this water is not a once-a-week exercise, nor even daily devotions, but moment by moment living in the presence of God, speaking, listening, obeying his voice, in an attitude of thankfulness and praise, and continual searching for more of the fulness that is only found in Christ. It is “to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14).

So how is your own spiritual life? We can always improve and walk closer with God, but if your life is characterized by deadness, duty, depression, and dreary dryness, if you seem bogged down, making no progress, or are merely satisfied with your current spiritual state, then you are trying to live from a cistern.

2 Tim. 1:6 – “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”