

Broken Cisterns

Jeremiah 2-3

WHAT WE FOUND

God opened His case against Israel as covenant judge, “I still contend with you” (2:9), and yet in the voice of a betrayed Husband: “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride” (2:2). Scripture and Catholic tradition have long heard the Sinai covenant in marital terms, which means idolatry is not mere rule-breaking. It is adultery, and it wounds a Person. Even the religious professionals failed: the priests no longer asked “Where is the LORD?”, the handlers of the law did not know Him, and the prophets chased what does not profit (2:8).

Then the thesis verse. Israel committed exactly two evils: forsaking **the fountain of living waters**, and hewing out **broken cisterns that can hold no water** (2:13). Sin is thirsty, hardworking, and doomed: chiseling rock for stagnant water while the spring flows nearby. And we found Jesus claiming the fountain in His own voice, offering living water to a woman who had had five husbands (John 4:10) and crying out at the feast, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37).

Best of all, chapter 3. By the logic of Israel’s own divorce law the case looked closed, and God’s mercy reversed the verdict: “Return, faithless Israel... for I am merciful” (3:12). He does not only forgive the past; He promises to repair the heart itself: “Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness” (3:22). While we live, no repentant sinner’s case is ever closed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine · *Confessions, Book I*

In the opening paragraph of his *Confessions*, St. Augustine writes the sentence that explains every broken cistern ever dug: You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You. He had tried the cisterns himself. The restlessness is not a design flaw. It is a homing signal.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bernard of Clairvaux · *Sermons on the Song of Songs*

St. Bernard taught that among all the ways Scripture names the soul’s relation to God, the most intimate is bride. When Jeremiah frames sin as adultery, he is testifying to how high the original invitation was.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Teresa of Avila · *The Book of Her Life*

St. Teresa described the soul in prayer as a garden watered in four ways, from the hard labor of the bucket to the sheer gift of rain (Life, ch. 11). The fountain of living waters is an invitation to drink daily, which is what prayer is.

Live It This Week

- Once a day, when you feel a want, pause and ask one question before you reach for anything: what is this thirst actually for? Answer honestly, then say one sentence to the Fountain.
- Choose one cistern this week and fast from it for a single day. Notice what rises up in its absence, and bring that to prayer.
- If you have been away from the Sacrament of Reconciliation, hear 3:22 as addressed to you and take one step: find your parish confession times and put one on your calendar.

Memory Verse

"For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:13, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Jeremiah 7.

Catechism References

CCC 27 · CCC 2560 · CCC 1428