

## “Recalling Governors and Gods”

### Jeremiah 2:9-13

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What was the worst deal you ever made? I have no trouble recalling mine. In 1970, I traded a 1965 Mustang, white with red interior, for a two-tone pea green Ford LTD. It was a living room on wheels and ugly one at that.

My father was a car salesman and encouraged me to make the change. I understood completely his logic and evidently agreed with it. I had accepted my first pastorate while in college, which meant I was going to do a lot of driving. He felt I needed a “heavier car with a bigger motor.” I got that, all right. That eight-cylinder tank would fly and at times I did.

What I would give for that Mustang today. It would be worth a fortune. When we have our annual car show in the church parking lot, I sit in one of those Mustangs from that era and reminisce. It’s painfully fun.

As bad as that trade was, it does not compare to the trade many Jews made during Jeremiah’s time, around six hundred years before Christ. They traded God, a little like ball players are traded these days.

Jeremiah accused his countrymen of trading their God, the God of creation, the God of the patriarchs, the God that liberated them from slavery in Egypt, the God that sustained them in the wilderness and the God that gave them a homeland. They traded Him.

**For whom did they trade Him?** They traded Him for the idols that were crafted from the minds and by the hands of the people around them.

**What was God’s reaction to this trade?** Shock. He could hardly believe it. Listen to the way Jeremiah describes God’s reaction.

*“Cross over to the coasts of Kittim and look. Send to Kedar and observe closely. See if there has ever been anything like this. Has a nation ever changed its gods? Yet they are not gods at all. But my people have exchanged my glory for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror. 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 2:10-13.

I imagine it would take a lot to shock God, wouldn’t you? He has seen it all. Surely nothing surprises Him. And yet, God seemed completely baffled by Israel’s unfaithfulness. They did something even pagans would not do, traded Him for other gods.

This made as much sense to God as a person in Judah trading a piece of land with a bubbling stream of fresh water for a parcel of land that had a leaky cistern. It made absolutely no sense. It was a horrible trade.

When I was five years old, my family moved out of town into the country. My parents did two things immediately after relocating. They had an addition built on to the white frame house and a cistern dug behind the house. I still recall the man with the backhoe that came to dig that cistern. I watched him move that dirt and thought it was the grandest thing I had ever seen. I would peer into that hole and wonder if he was close to the center of the universe.

My lofty opinion of the cistern changed after it became operational. The gutters that fed the cistern had to be cleaned frequently so that debris would not block the flow of water. Each time it rained, the valve on the gutters had to be moved to direct the flow of water into the cistern. The amount of water in the cistern was directly related to the amount of rainfall and in the summer that could be scarce. This meant that water had to be purchased and rationed. The pump that lifted the water out of the cistern into the house needed constant repair. When the land around the cistern shifted, cracks would develop and precious water would leak. Cisterns were not fun. They were a headache!

Contrast this with the Hazel Creek spring that is adjacent to the church by that name that I once pastored. That church is two hundred six years old. The reason it is that old is because it sits next to that spring. People would ride their horses and wagons for miles to get water from that spring. It became a gathering place and the most logical location for a church in 1797. To this day, no one ever remembers a time when that spring has been dry. In the driest of conditions, water would flow. Regardless of how many people dipped their buckets in it to retrieve water, it never ran dry. You could go there now and scoop up a handful of cool, clean water. It would not disappoint you.

If you were a landowner, which source of water would you prefer? If you lived in a semi-arid land where water was your most precious commodity and your survival depended upon an unlimited supply of fresh water, would you want a spring or a cistern? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to answer that one, does it? This was why God was shocked when the people that He had been so faithful to traded Him. It was like trading a parcel of land with a spring of living water for one with a leaky cistern. It made no sense!

**Why do you think they did it?** Why does anyone trade something? They think they are getting something better.

**What do you think they wanted that God did not provide?** That's a tough question to answer. Looking at one of the gods they traded for, Baal, it appears they wanted God to guarantee them a successful and prosperous life. They wanted to win the lottery and win it big. They wanted wealth and lots of time to enjoy it. So, they traded Him for a god that would promise it. Sounds a little like what we are hearing from California these days.

**Did Baal meet their expectations?** That's an easy one to answer. No. Baal was not a living God. He was a worthless idol that possessed no power, other than the ability to fool the people.

**How long did it take the Jews to realize they had made a bad trade?** It took some longer than others. Some never discovered it.

Jeremiah did his part, though. He warned the people about their faulty thinking and encouraged them to reverse their trade. He still is doing the same for us, isn't he? Are you listening?

**Perhaps you have been thinking about making a trade.** You have grown impatient with God. He doesn't seem to be as responsive to your needs as you would like. You're in the market for another god. Shopping around.

I hope you will read this passage again. And read John 6:60-69. Some of Jesus' disciples turned back and no longer followed him after he challenged them to a life of service and sacrifices. They decided to trade him for another leader. This prompted Jesus to look at the twelve he had chosen and ask, *"You do not want to leave too, do you?"* Simon Peter replied, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."*

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" If you are going to trade Jesus for another god, make sure you get a better deal. Find someone that can provide more than meaning, purpose, guidance, direction, peace, security, strength, courage, confidence, value, worth, dignity, forgiveness, faith, hope, love and eternal life. If you cannot, you might want to reconsider. You certainly don't want to be driving a two-tone pea green LTD when you could be driving a Mustang.