

Lead In – Welcome to the church that gathers at Bethel. We gather for one reason and one reason only: the gospel—Jesus Christ in our place. His holy life counted as ours, His righteousness covering our sin, and His resurrection securing our hope, now and forever. Today we continue our worship through the book of [Book of Jeremiah](#).

Let me ask you—what do these foods have in common? [Potato chips, pepperoni pizza, pretzels, French fries, ramen, bacon](#). They all do the same thing: they make you **thirsty**.

That dry, restless, almost desperate sensation where your whole body begins to sound the alarm: *something is not right*.

God has designed your body with a warning system. Deep within your brain, in the [hypothalamus](#), there are tiny sensors constantly evaluating your condition. And the moment your body begins to dry out, the signal is sent urgent, undeniable: *Drink*.

There is even a rare condition called [Adipsia](#), where a person loses the ability to feel thirst at all—even when their body is dangerously dehydrated. It is not a gift; it is a disorder. Because **thirst**, rightly understood, is a [mercy](#).

Today in Jeremiah, the prophet stands before a people who are **thirsty**. Not physically—but spiritually parched. Their problem is not that they thirst. Their problem is far more tragic: They do not know where to drink.

They have turned from the [fountain](#). They have [abandoned](#) the source. And in its place, they (we) have begun [digging](#). Broken wells, cracked cisterns, *sources that can't satisfy* their thirst.

The Wells We Dig (Jeremiah 2:13)

The Broken Wells of [Forgetfulness](#) (2:1-8) Before the people of Judah ever dug broken [cisterns](#), something far more subtle—and far more dangerous—had already taken hold. Scripture gives us no date, no moment, no defining event, and that silence is telling. Somewhere along the ordinary rhythms of life, the people of God simply stopped asking the most basic question: “*Where is the Lord?*” (2:6). And in that moment—*whenever it was*—they began to forget who they were. *They were holy to the Lord* (2:3), *set apart* by grace, marked by covenant love. Yet over time, that [identity faded](#). One day—*who knows which day?*—they began to see themselves as no different from the nations: common, fleshly, unholy, and ordinary.

This forgetfulness spread beyond the people to their leaders. [The priests forgot](#). Those entrusted with the Word no longer spoke it. The great saving acts of Yahweh—the story

that formed and defined them—fell silent on their lips. Their shaping memory was neglected, and when the story of God is **forgotten**, the people of God lose their distinctiveness and their reason for being. **What if one of Satan’s most effective strategies is not open rebellion, but quiet erosion?** Not loud denial, but slow drift—a long obedience in the wrong direction?

It is precisely against this danger that our Savior, Jesus Christ, gave His church a command of **remembrance**. On the night He was betrayed, He took bread, broke it, and said, *“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me”* (Luke 22:19). Because He knows the heart is prone to **wander** and forget. And here is the warning: worse than spiritual thirst is **losing** the ability to thirst at all [**Adipsia**]—a numb soul that no longer longs for God.

This is why we gather. We sing the gospel, preach the gospel, and pray the gospel so we will **remember**. We refuse to become a people who forget His grace. We will not forget where we came from or the mercy that found us and sustains us. The question presses in, personally and urgently: *have you (where have you) forgotten the grace of the Lord upon your life today?*

The Broken Wells of Self-Reliance (Jeremiah 2:13) But the people of God had not forgotten everything. Someone still knew how to dig. And at first glance, that sounds promising—because **where do you find water in the ancient world?** In a well. Like the wells of **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**—places where life was sustained and generations were blessed. But these were different. These were not wells fed by a **living spring**. These were **cisterns**—man-made, hollowed out, dependent on human effort, and ultimately unable to sustain life. And here is the tragedy: they dug **them for themselves**. They labored with their own hands, for their own benefit, while the very spring they abandoned produced water freely and abundantly.

Do you see the subtle shift? **For themselves**. Quietly, almost imperceptibly, they turned from the Lord—the **fountain of living waters**—and took up their **tools**. With **effort** and **intention**, they began to **carve out a life apart from God**. To construct their own source. To manufacture satisfaction. This is the essence of self-reliance: not the absence of **thirst**, but the decision to satisfy it on your own terms.

And we are not so different. We dig wells every day, trying to quiet the ache of the soul while abandoning the living water of the Lord.

We drink from the well of **social media** and **digital connection**, believing the promise: “Here, you will be seen, known, and connected.” And yet, the more we drink, the more the data tells us the same story—higher use, deeper loneliness.

We drink from the well of **achievement** and **productivity**, telling ourselves, “If I accomplish enough, I will matter.” But you were not created merely for output—you were created for purpose, for belonging, for communion with God.

We drink from the well of the **world’s sexual ethic**, convinced that intimacy without covenant will satisfy. “If I find the right person, I will be whole.” And yet what is offered is not love and flourishing, but destruction.

We escape to the well of **entertainment or substances**, numbing the ache with distraction. “You can scroll it away, stream it away, laugh it away.” But it does not heal. It only dulls.

We dig wells (self-reliance) every day, trying to quiet the ache of the soul

The Broken Wells of Self-Destruction (Jeremiah 2:13) Notice the nature of these **cisterns**. They are not only self-dug—they are shattered. Not merely insufficient but broken. **Cracked** at the foundation.

What a picture of sin.

Sin does not merely disappoint—it **destroys**. It **promises** life but delivers ruin. It **lures**, then enslaves. It whispers **satisfaction** yet leaves desolation. It hollows the soul, hardens the heart, and fractures everything it touches. You **drink**—but remain **thirsty**.

This is the tragedy of self-destruction: we keep returning to what ruins us. We patch the cracks, dig deeper, and believe, *this time it will hold*. But it never does.

And the words of Jesus Christ confront us: “*For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction*” (cf. Matthew 7:13). It seems easy to patch small cracks, but sin creates a hole in your soul that only Christ can fix.

We dig wells (self-destruction) every day, but what is broken cannot give life.

The Cure for Broken Cisterns (Jeremiah 3:21) **Cisterns** were never meant to be the source of life—they were meant to **collect from it**. And Jeremiah begins to lift our eyes beyond the broken ground of human effort to a coming day. He uses this language

repeatedly: “*in those days*” (3:16) ... “*at that time*” (3:17). These are not random phrases. They are **prophetic** markers—pointing forward to a future, to the days of the Messiah, when God Himself would provide what His people could never secure.

And in that day, Jesus Christ stood in the Temple and cried out, “*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. The one who believes in me... will have streams of living water flow from deep within him*” (John 7:37–38).

Do you see the assumption? Even in the sanctuary, Jesus knows they are thirsty.

And more than that—He declares that everything they were seeking, everything they were celebrating, finds its fulfillment not in the ritual, not in the system, but in Him. He is not merely offering water—He is the **source**. He is the true Temple. He is the fountain of living waters.

And it is no accident that the Gospel of John alone records this moment: when they came to Jesus on the cross, **they did not break His legs, but pierced His side—and at once, blood and water flowed** (John 19:34).

The water that satisfies your soul was not drawn from a **well**—it flowed from a **wound**. From the pierced side of Christ comes life. From His death flows the water that truly satisfies.

So, friend, hear this plainly: have you lost your ability to thirst? Has your conscience grown so dull, so seared by sin, that you no longer hear the voice of your Creator?

Then come back. Come to Christ.

Are you still drinking from the wells of self-reliance or self-destruction? Run from the bitter waters of this world and find refreshment in Him.

Are you weary and forgetful? Today will you remember again The One who stood in the sanctuary and cried out, “*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.*”

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one, Stoop down, and drink, and live.”
I came to Jesus, and I drank Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, And now I live in him (Horatius Bonar)

Exegetical Notes

Jer. 2:1 The word of the LORD came to me: ² “Go and announce directly to Jerusalem that this is what the LORD says:

**I remember the loyalty of your youth,
your love as a bride—
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.**

³ **Israel was holy to the LORD,
the firstfruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it found themselves guilty;
disaster came on them.”**

This is the LORD’s declaration.

Josiah’s finding of the book of the Law may have introduced a time of reform, but the reform on the people’s part was mostly superficial, even though the king himself was completely sincere. Thus, Jeremiah begins his message with a reminiscence of the nation’s days during their wilderness wanderings.

How often did the Exodus event only led to a superficial reform in the hearts of God’s people. Golden calf, rebellion of Merebah, and the cravings of Egypt remained.

Loyalty/Devotion

Devotion. Heb. hesed has a wide range of connotations. Usually, God's gracious favor toward his people, or the favor of men to men, it does not properly describe a quality that men exhibit toward God (ABC, 15).

Bride

The relationship between God and the nation is depicted as a marriage, with a happy honeymoon period in the desert (Deut. 8:2-4).

Loyalty is covenantal language.

Therefore, as a wife belongs to her husband, and as first fruit belongs to Yahweh, Israel existed to that she might belong exclusively to Yahweh (Exod. 19:6).

Suddenly, covenantal relationship took an unexpected turn and anyone who act of the fistfights was guilty.

Holy

Israel had been set apart (= "holy") by God as the first of God's chosen ones among the nations, like the first fruits from the harvest that people set apart as an offering to God (see Num 18:12-13; Deut 26:1-2; cf. Israel as firstborn in 31:9).

Remarkably, God harvested first fruits "in a land not sown"! It is striking that Israel is considered to be a gift not only set apart by God, but also for God. This relationship with Israel was not one-sided, with benefits only for Israel. For God, too, this relationship that included Israel's devotion (hesed) was a gift (Fretheim, 62).

Jer. 2:4 Hear the word of the LORD, house of Jacob and all families of the house of Israel.

What follows, as it is called elsewhere in the Prophets, a prophetic lawsuit (v.9). 2:4 is the only place in Jeremiah where the people are addressed as Jacob and Israel in a judgement message.

Jeremiah uses these titles because they recall god's previous gracious dealings with them. These names also stress how far the nation has gone away from Yahweh.

⁵ This is what the LORD says:

**What fault did your ancestors find in me
that they went so far from me,
followed worthless idols,
and became worthless themselves?**

Ancestors

This double reference to past and present can be seen in the interchanging reference to "ancestors" (2:5-6) and the multigenerational "you" who is the object of God's direct address (2:9; see 3:25, "we and our ancestors"; 14:20). This "generation" is also directly addressed in 2:31 (Fretheim, 60).

**6 They stopped asking, “Where is the LORD
who brought us from the land of Egypt,
who led us through the wilderness,
through a land of deserts and ravines,
through a land of drought and darkness,
a land no one traveled through
and where no one lived?”**

Stopped Asking

“They did not ask” is repeated twice as further evidence of their forgetting the Lord. It never occurred to them to ask, “Where is Yahweh?”

Everyone in leadership from the priests to kings to prophets are indicted in covenant forgetfulness.

The word land occurs five times as a reminder of the Promise and what is at stake.

Didn't anyone in that day ask, "Where is Yahweh?" Judah had become clueless and unaware of how desperate its situation really was. This is a wakeup call for us in our day to "smell the coffee" and change our lifestyles before the threatened judgment comes on us as well. Can't we see that the judgment of God is coming very soon on us, as it came on Judah? Can't we see that all our trust in our technology, our economy, our military hardware, and our wisdom is doomed to fail if we do not come to Christ, who alone is the source of real living? We must change and turn to God in repentance, or the handwriting is already on the wall for our nation and all the nations of the world (Kaiser, 49)!

In Jer. 2:6, 8 we are told what Israel did wrong. "They did not say..." The recital of Yahweh's story was no longer on their lips. They disregarded their shaping memory. Where the story of Yahweh is forgotten, Israel disregards its peculiar covenantal way in the world, and soon loses its reason for being (Bruggeman, 35).

**7 I brought you to a fertile land
to eat its fruit and bounty,
but after you entered, you defiled my land;
you made my inheritance detestable.**
8 The priests quit asking, “Where is the LORD?”

**The experts in the law no longer knew me,
and the rulers rebelled against me.
The prophets prophesied by Baal
and followed useless idols.**

Useless/Things that do not profit

The first response that Jeremiah offers is that idolatry is bad because it is bad for Israel. In rejecting Yahweh, his people harm themselves in pursuing "things that do not profit" (2:8) and exchanging the "fountain of living waters" for "broken cisterns that can hold no water" (v. 13).

When the phrase "did not say" is repeated a second time (v. 8), we are given evidence of the result of such forgetting. Where there is such amnesia, one is not surprised that derivative requirements of humanness erode. Where the creed is distorted, public life becomes skewed. The entire leadership structure of the community is included in the indictment: priests, judges, rulers, prophets — civic and religious leadership. To "know Yahweh" (v. 8; cf. 22:16) is to practice justice (Brueggeman, 35).

Jer. 2:9 Therefore, I will bring a case against you again.

This is the LORD's declaration.

I will bring a case against your children's children.

10 Cross over to the coasts of Cyprus and take a look.

**Send someone to Kedar and consider carefully;
see if there has ever been anything like this:**

11 Has a nation ever exchanged its gods?

(But they were not gods!)

**Yet my people have exchanged their Glory
for useless idols.**

Exchanged

Has a nation given up its gods / though they are ungod? The prophet here frames and a fortiori argument: in new lands that are known, from west to east, has a people switched gods, even though the gods they worship are not real? Yet Israel has exchanged its own glorious God for a set of illusions (Alter, 857).

¹² **Be appalled at this, heavens;
be shocked and utterly desolated!
This is the LORD's declaration.**

**Jer. 2:13 For my people have committed a double evil:
They have abandoned me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug cisterns for themselves—
cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.**

Living Water

Behind Jrm's metaphor could well be Isa 8:6-8: there Israel has refused the waters of Shiloah which supply Jerusalem, so that God must bring over them the waters of the river (the Euphrates). Shiloah was an aqueduct from the spring of Gihon; that spring gushes several times a day¹²³ and served Isaiah as a metaphor for Yahweh's word¹²⁴ or for Yahweh himself as a helper in trouble. ¹²⁵ On the other hand, "n Tipe "spring/fountain of life" is a standard phrase (Ps 36:10; Prov 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22) for "source of life," and one wonders whether this is not some otiose phrase with mythological overtones like "tree of life."¹²⁶ All these intersecting images—running water, source of life, living God, and a spring as symbol for Yahweh or his word in Isaiah—coalesce in Jrm's phrase, which recurs in the book (17:13). See Hermeneia, 93.

Yahweh is the living water that originates as gift outside of Israel (cf. John 4:10). Israel need not generate its own water or conjure its own life. It is freely given by this gracious partner of a God who is owner and husband. But Israel has rejected such a free gift that embodies its very life and wants to be its own source of life — which of course leads only to death (Bruggeman, 37).

Dug

Man, made in the image of God, now becomes a laborer in vanity. With great effort, with careful intention, he takes up his tools and begins to carve—to shape a life, to construct a source, to build satisfaction apart from God.

He digs. He digs in the field of pleasure. He digs in the soil of success. He digs in the ground of relationships, possessions, reputation, control. And all the while he says, *"This will hold. This will satisfy. This will sustain me."*

Cisterns

Cisterns, broken cisterns. A cistern hewn in rock is a receptacle for storing water (perhaps rainwater) and not a water source or spring that flows continually. Its sides might be plastered but would be subject to cracks and breaks through which the water could leak out (Alter, 859).

They are like broken cisterns. These holes in the ground were used to hold water in times of drought and would have been plastered to prevent seepage. But the plaster could easily crack, and the water would leak out. Similarly, these 'suppliers of human needs' or idols are unreliable (ESV, 79).

For themselves

And they have dug cisterns "for themselves" (o7b): rarely has an ethical dative (GKC sec. 119s) carried so much irony—they dig the cisterns by themselves and for their own benefit, while the spring which they abandoned produces water of itself. And this ethical dative, usually a dative of advantage, is occasionally a dative of disadvantage (e.g., Ezek 37:11), so that the question remains whether the cisterns are to the advantage of the excavators (Hermeneia, = 93).

See John 4:1-21

See also John 7:37-39

Cracked/Broken

Not merely insufficient—**broken**.

Cracked at the foundation. Leaking at every seam.

Unable, by their very nature, to do what the soul demands. Oh, what a picture of sin! The sinner labors to create what only God can give. He toils to secure what cannot be secured. He drinks—and yet remains thirsty.

CONSEQUENCES OF APOSTASY

Jer. 2:14 **Is Israel a slave?**

**Was he born into slavery?
Why else has he become a prey?**

4-16. Three questions are asked, which establish a pattern found in other Jeremianic passages (8:4-s, 19, 22). The first two questions are rhetorical: of course, Israel is not a slave, because God has delivered them out of slavery. Of course they are not a slave born in their master's house. So why then are they taken away into slavery through war? Why then emphasizes the absurdity of the situation and also implies an accusation (ESV, 79).

15 **The young lions have roared at him;
they have roared loudly.
They have laid waste his land.
His cities are in ruins, without inhabitants.**

16 **The men of Memphis and Tahpanhes
have also broken your skull.**

17 **Have you not brought this on yourself
by abandoning the LORD your God
while he was leading you along the way?**

18 **Now what will you gain
by traveling along the way to Egypt
to drink the water of the Nile?
What will you gain
by traveling along the way to Assyria
to drink the water of the Euphrates?**

19 **Your own evil will discipline you;
your own apostasies will reprimand you.
Recognize how evil and bitter it is
for you to abandon the LORD your God
and to have no fear of me.**

This is the declaration of the Lord GOD of Armies.

**Jer. 2:20 For long ago I broke your yoke;
I tore off your chains.
You insisted, "I will not serve!"
On every high hill
and under every green tree
you lay down like a prostitute.**

You Insisted

The theme of shamelessness is probed by quoting the outrageous speech of Yahweh's people. Five times in this section the saga of the people's refusal to repent is exposed using their own words. First, the people saved in the exodus refused to acknowledge Yahweh as a better master than Egypt: "I will not serve (ESV, 453)."

Besides idolatry as self-destruction, Jeremiah's second response is that it includes self-deception as well. The contradictory statements of Israel in the passage reveal a deeply conflicted people. Idolatrous Israel at first has the willpower to say, "I will not serve" God (v. 20), and to protest against Yahweh, "I am not unclean, I have not gone after the Baals" (v. 23). See ESV, 456.

Jer. 2:21 I planted you, a choice vine
from the very best seed.
How then could you turn into
a degenerate, foreign vine?

Jer. 2:22 Even if you wash with lye
and use a great amount of bleach,
the stain of your iniquity is still in front of me.

This is the Lord GOD's declaration.
²³ How can you protest, "I am not defiled;
I have not followed the Baals"?
Look at your behavior in the valley;
acknowledge what you have done.
You are a swift young camel
twisting and turning on her way,
²⁴ a wild donkey at home in the wilderness.
She sniffs the wind in the heat of her desire.
Who can control her passion?
All who look for her will not become weary;
they will find her in her mating season.
²⁵ Keep your feet from going bare
and your throat from thirst.
But you say, "It's hopeless;
I love strangers,
and I will continue to follow them."

Jer. 2:26 Like the shame of a thief when he is caught,

so, the house of Israel has been put to shame.
They, their kings, their officials,
their priests, and their prophets
27 say to a tree, "You are my father,"
and to a stone, "You gave birth to me."
For they have turned their back to me
and not their face,
yet in their time of disaster they beg,
"Rise up and save us!"

This is a type of "foxhole religion," but it is also a testimony to the complete bankruptcy of Canaanite religion. While Judah and Israel had been attracted to the Canaanite gods because they imposed few if any moral restraints on them, when times get tough, they felt it was time to revert to Yahweh and to the way they had previously acted before they abandoned God in favor of their current list of discount gods (Kaiser, 57).

28 **But where are your gods you made for yourself?**
Let them rise up and save you
in your time of disaster if they can,
for your gods are as numerous as your cities, Judah.

JUDGMENT DESERVED

Jer. 2:29 Why do you bring a case against me?
All of you have rebelled against me.
This is the LORD's declaration.
30 **I have struck down your children in vain;**
they would not accept discipline.
Your own sword has devoured your prophets
like a ravaging lion.
31 **Evil generation,**
pay attention to the word of the LORD!
Have I been a wilderness to Israel
or a land of dense darkness?
Why do my people claim,
"We will go where we want;
we will no longer come to you"?
32 **Can a young woman forget her jewelry**
or a bride her wedding sash?

Yet my people have forgotten me
for countless days.

33 How skillfully you pursue love;
you also teach evil women your ways.

34 Moreover, your skirts are stained
with the blood of the innocent poor.
You did not catch them breaking and entering.
But in spite of all these things

35 you claim, "I am innocent.
His anger is sure to turn away from me."
But I will certainly judge you
because you have said, "I have not sinned."

36 How unstable you are,
constantly changing your ways!
You will be put to shame by Egypt
just as you were put to shame by Assyria.

37 Moreover, you will be led out from here
with your hands on your head
since the LORD has rejected those you trust;
you will not succeed even with their help.

WAGES OF APOSTASY

Jer. 3:1 If a man divorces his wife
and she leaves him to marry another,
can he ever return to her?
Wouldn't such a land become totally defiled?
But you!
You have prostituted yourself with many partners—
can you return to me?

This is the LORD's declaration.

2 Look to the barren heights and see.
Where have you not been immoral?
You sat waiting for them beside the highways
like a nomad in the desert.
You have defiled the land
with your prostitution and wickedness.

3 This is why the showers haven't come—
why there has been no spring rain.
You have the brazen look of a prostitute

and refuse to be ashamed.
4 Haven't you recently called to me, "My Father!
You were my friend in my youth.
5 Will he bear a grudge forever?
Will he be endlessly infuriated?"
This is what you have said,
but you have done the evil things
you are capable of.

UNFAITHFUL ISRAEL, TREACHEROUS JUDAH

Jer. 3:6 In the days of King Josiah the LORD asked me, "Have you seen what unfaithful Israel has done? She has ascended every high hill and gone under every green tree to prostitute herself there. ⁷ I thought, 'After she has done all these things, she will return to me.' But she didn't return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸ I observed that it was because unfaithful Israel had committed adultery that I had sent her away and had given her a certificate of divorce. Nevertheless, her treacherous sister Judah was not afraid but also went and prostituted herself. ⁹ Indifferent to her prostitution, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. ¹⁰ Yet in spite of all this, her treacherous sister Judah didn't return to me with all her heart—only in pretense."

This is the LORD's declaration.

Jer. 3:11 The LORD announced to me, "Unfaithful Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. ¹² Go, proclaim these words to the north, and say,

'Return, unfaithful Israel.

This is the LORD's declaration.

I will not look on you with anger,
for I am unfailing in my love.

This is the LORD's declaration.

I will not be angry forever.

13 Only acknowledge your guilt—
you have rebelled against the LORD your God.
You have scattered your favors to strangers
under every green tree
and have not obeyed me.

This is the LORD's declaration.

Jer. 3:14 “Return, you faithless children—this is the LORD’s declaration—for I am your master, and I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ I will give you shepherds who are loyal to me, and they will shepherd you with knowledge and skill. ¹⁶ When you multiply and increase in the land, in those days—this is the LORD’s declaration—no one will say again, “The ark of the LORD’s covenant.” It will never come to mind, and no one will remember or miss it. Another one will not be made.

In Those Days

All this is set in those days, a time that pointed to the messianic times coming in the future, and expression distinctive to Jeremiah (2:36; 33:15; 50:4 among others).

Why will the ark fade?

1. Since the ark contained a copy of the law, it will no longer be useful. See Jeremiah 31:31-34.
2. The ark served as the throne of God, but now Yah is present in Jerusalem. See Ezek. 48:25.

¹⁷ At that time Jerusalem will be called The LORD’s Throne, and all the nations will be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD in Jerusalem. They will cease to follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. ¹⁸ In those days the house of Judah will join with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land I have given your ancestors to inherit.”

Now they will gather in repentance and humility before Yahweh. Even more startling is that the historic division between the north and the south will be ended and the two will "join... together" in "the land [God] gave [their forefathers as an inheritance]" (v. 18b-c).

Hope for the future days when Messiah will come in all his glory back to earth was part and parcel of Israel's and Judah's prospect for the days to come. Jeremiah had apparently gone to minister in the northern tribes in hopes of preparing them for another day that will be brighter than the days when an earlier generation had been divorced from God. In that time the nation will multiply and increase in size, and the Lord will sit on his throne in the city of Jerusalem. What a glorious day that will be (Kaiser, 73).

TRUE REPENTANCE

- 19 I thought, “How I long to make you my sons
and give you a desirable land,
the most beautiful inheritance of all the nations.”
I thought, “You will call me ‘My Father’
and never turn away from me.”
- 20 However, as a woman may betray her lover,
so, you have betrayed me, house of Israel.
This is the LORD’s declaration.

Jer. 3:21 A sound is heard on the barren heights:
the children of Israel weeping and begging for mercy,
for they have perverted their way;
they have forgotten the LORD their God.

Sound

It is as if the prophet hears a penitential song coming from the northern kingdom in exile (v. 21), which again may have been meant to be heard by Judah (TOTC, 89).

- 22 Return, you faithless children.
I will heal your unfaithfulness.
“Here we are, coming to you,
for you are the LORD our God.
- 23 Surely, falsehood comes from the hills,
commotion from the mountains,
but the salvation of Israel
is only in the LORD our God.
- 24 From the time of our youth
the shameful one has consumed
what our ancestors have worked for—
their flocks and their herds,
their sons and their daughters.
- 25 Let us lie down in our shame;
let our disgrace cover us.

**We have sinned against the LORD our God,
both we and our ancestors,
from the time of our youth even to this day.
We have not obeyed the LORD our God.”**

John 4:1 When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard he was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (though Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were), ³ he left Judea and went again to Galilee.

John is the only Gospel that tells us of the baptizing ministries of Jesus and his disciples (ECNT, 145).

Jesus return trip from Jerusalem Passover back to Galilee led him, by divine necessity, through Samaria.

⁴ He had to travel through Samaria; ⁵ so he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon.

Had to

May indicate divine necessity. Jesus' going through Samara was according to the plan and the will of God.

Jesus crosses at least three significant barriers in the story: the socio-ethnic barrier of centuries of Jewish-Samaritan prejudice; the gender barrier; and the moral barrier imposed by this woman's assumed behavior (Keener, 584).

The necessity that compels Jesus to take this route is probably his mission (Keener, 590).

Through Samaria

Was the usual trek taken by travelers from Judea to Galilee (ECNT, 146).

However, strict Jews sought to bypass Samaria by opting for a longer, less direct route, which would have involved crossing the Jordan and traveling on the east side.

Samaria was the shortest and best route; thus, Josephus claimed what this was the necessary route on occasions of haste. But Jesus appears not to have been in a hurry (Keener, 589).

The journey will take only two or three days in real time.

Sychar

Modern day 'Askar? Because Shechem was closer, some commentators prefer that town. Shechem is probably the site of the Samaritan conversions in Acts 8.

Even though Sychar is not Shechem, it is nearby, and the traditions evoked by the story are associated with Shechem by Samaritans and Jews alike (NICNT, 236).

Years later when the Israelites occupied Central Canaan, they buried Joseph's bones at Shechem in the portion of ground which Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor (Bruce, 101).

Jacob's Well

The reference to Jacob's well and the later mention of Mount Gerizim place Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in the framework of holy geography, which Jesus is shown to transcend (ECNT, 147).

The OT nowhere mentions Joseph digging a well here (or anywhere).

The word *well* in v.6 denotes a running spring. The word in vv 11 and 12 mean a cistern or dug out well. Jacob's well is both: it was dug out, but it is fed by an underground spring that is remarkably reliable to this day (PNTC, 217).

Worn out

Indicates Jesus labor for the harvest (4:38) the only other use of "labor" in the Gospel of John (Keener, 591).

Noon

A possible contrast between the time of day at which Jesus met the Samaritan woman and the time of Nikodemus's visit (ECNT, 147).

Possibly there may be a connection with Pilate's presentation of Jesus at noon (19:14) which leads to his death and the provision of living water (Keener, 592).

John 4:7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. "Give me a drink," Jesus said to her,⁸ because his disciples had gone into town to buy food.

That this Samaritan woman came alone, and she had come in the heat of the midday sun suggest she was looked down upon in her community on account of her low reputation (ECNT, 148).

Even without knowing all the details, one could probably assume that she came alone because she was unwelcome among the other women of Sychar.

John 4:9 "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

This possibly reflects a halakic ruling (mid-first century) that the “daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from their cradle” and hence that vessels handled by them are unclean (DOJG, 836).

By asking for a drink from a woman who had come to the well alone, Jesus himself being alone, broke all rules of Jewish piety. His taking the initiative invited the accusation of acting in a flirtatious manner. Jewish men did not speak to women in public. The fact that Isaac and Jacob met wives at the well created the sort of precedent that would further have cautioned devout Jews (ECNT, 148).

Cross-gender conversation at wells sometimes led to marriage (Keener, 597).

Samaritan women, like gentiles, were considered to be in a continual state of ritual uncleanness.

Thus, among six activities listed as unbecoming for a scholar is conversing with a woman, and in theory the strict opined that a wife could be divorced without her marriage settlement if she spoke with a man in the street (Keener, 596).

You a Jew

What is most significant about the interaction is that while Jesus own people accuse him of being a Samaritan (8:48) or a Galilean (7:40), the Samaritan woman recognizes Jesus as a Jew and he agrees (Keener, 601).

John 4:10 Jesus answered, “If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would ask him, and he would give you living water.”

Give

This verb dominates this section, occurring seven times between 4:7 and 4:15.

Living Water

On a literal level, living water, refers to highly coveted fresh spring water, as opposed to stagnant water.

Living water was what one called running water, such as flows from the spring that feeds the well of Jacob (Ridderbos, 155).

Jer 2:13 For my people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves— cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.

John 4:11 “Sir,” said the woman, “you don’t even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this ‘living water’? ¹² You aren’t greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock.”

Bucket

Any band of travelers would have had a skin bucket for drawing water. Jesus’ disciples probably carried with them, but they had left to buy supplies.

Deep

The well today is still over one hundred feet deep and probably was deeper back then. Jacob’s well may have been the deepest well in all of Palestine (ECNT, 150).

Flocks

At a different well, Jacob provided water for the flocks, but Jesus provides water for whoever would drink (Keener, 602).

John 4:13 Jesus said, “Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life.”

Thirst

Jesus ministers to a keenly felt need. Thirst is among the most intense and imperative human cravings (ECNT, 151).

Jesus in a function of his full humanity is thirsty here and at the cross (19:28-30).

The gift of water from the well of Jacob was for the Samaritans, like the manna in the wilderness to Israel, a reminder of the sacred tradition - continuing evidence of God's richly salvific involvement with his people through history. When Jesus describes the gift of God in terms from tradition, such as "living water" and "bread from heaven," the adjectives "living," "true," "good," and the like are rooted theologically not in an ontological contrast between illusion and reality but in a salvation-historical contrast (Ridderbos, 157).

What Jesus brings is the fulfillment, the "truth" and the "fullness" of the gift of God. Everything that preceded had reference to that fullness but could not provide it. None of this is opposed to the past, therefore, but it brings the past into the future (cf. 8:56ff.; see also the comments on 1:17). What is referred to here as "living water" is already present in the Old Testament portrayal of what the people in their distress desired from God, and that not only in a physical sense (cf. Pss. 23:2ff.; 36:8; Is. 12:3, etc.): one reads of "thirst for God" (Ps. 42:1) and of God as the "fountain of life" (Ps. 36:9; Jr. 2:13: "the fountain of living waters"); the salvation of the Lord is offered as waters for those who are thirsty (Is. 55:1 ff.) as contrasted with that which only temporarily quenches thirst.

But whereas Jewish teachers anticipated the living waters to spring from Jerusalem, Samaritans expected such waters closer to home.²²⁵ "The new reality brought by Jesus transcends both expectations: the eschatological river of life flows neither from Mount Gerizim nor from Mount Zion, but is to be found in Christ him-self."²²⁶ This passage thus continues the water motif of the Gospel, which contrasts ritual waters (not always negative but always comparatively impotent) with what Jesus brings (1:33; 2:6; 3:5, 22). See Keener, 605).

The soul's deepest thirst is for God himself, who has made us so that we can never be satisfied without him. 'Christ satisfies a man not by banishing his thirst, which would be to stunt his soul's growth, but by bestowing upon him by the gift of his Spirit an inward source of satisfaction which perennially and spontaneously supplies each recurrent need of refreshment (Bruce, 105).'

John 4:15 "Sir," the woman said to him, "give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

John 4:16 "Go call your husband," he told her, "and come back here." **John 4:17** "I don't have a husband," she answered. "You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus said.¹⁸ "For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

Call your husband

Jesus wanted to lead the woman to the realization that he knew her past and present life and thus to make her more open to the meaning of his words (Ridderbos, 159).

I don't have

Though technically truthful, the woman's statement is potentially misleading. She clings to her privacy and some semblance of respectability (ECNT, 152).

She is seeking to mislead him but is probably implying more than that she is embarrassed to talk about a shameful past.

Five Husbands

Jewish law generally disapproved of more than three legal marriages in lifetime, even in case of the death of previous husbands (ECNT, 152).

It is not clear that the woman who came to the well had been committing adultery, but five husbands had found some grounds to divorce her, and she was not living with a man to whom she was not married (Keener, 595).

Not your husband

For strict Jews and Samaritans, it would be almost equivalent to treating her as a concubine or a prostitute (Keener, 608).

John 4:19 "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet.²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

Unlike Nicodemus the Samaritan woman progresses in her understanding, from calling Jesus a prophet to serving, albeit somewhat ambivalently, as a witness. The woman's response is not an unequivocally positive as is usually maintained. First, she ignores Jesus' open claim in 4:26 and second, the negative answer at the very least appears somewhat hesitant that Jesus is the Christ (ECNT, 143).

The effect of Jesus' words seem to be that the woman is hurt and sobered by his knowledge of her secret but is liberated from the need to go on concealing it (ECNT, 153).

Now the woman switches to a religious (safer) topic.

Prophet

Thus, the Samaritan prophet would be the *Taheb*, the restorer, a sort of messianic figure (Keener, 610).

Samaritan liturgy for the Day of Atonement says of the Taheb (Samaritan counterpart to the Jewish Messiah), "water shall flow from his buckets" (Bruce, 105).

Mount Gerizim

It is unclear precisely when Samaritans built a temple of that location. Samaritan tradition places construction in the fifth century B.C.

You

Is emphatically plural and refers to the Jewish people whom the woman perceives Jesus to represent. Jesus responds in like manner, using plurals treating the woman as a representative of the Samaritan people (ECNT, 154).

John 4:21 Jesus told her, “Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews.

Spiritually speaking, the crucified and resurrected Christ would serve as a substitute for the Jerusalem temple as the new center of worship for God’s people. The woman has spoken of worship of the father and Jesus responds by speaking of worship of The Father (ECNT, 155).

Despite all of her societal shame, Jesus relates to this woman as a potential worshiper of God, not on the basis of her gender or her past relationship with men (Keener, 608).

Not on this mountain

John revisits the new-temple symbolism. In its most dramatic divergence from traditional Jewish expectations, this context speaks of a worship in the Spirit that ultimately transcends ethnic allegiances, just like the worship in Revelation (5:9-14).

Jesus is the true temple; he is the resurrection and the life (PNTC, 224).

From the Jews

The Jewish people are the instrument by which God’s redemption is mediated to others. However, it is precisely the fact that the Jews wanted to keep God’s gifts to themselves that drew God’s judgment (ECNT, 156).

The Samaritans accepted only Moses but rejected the Judean aspect of salvation history, including the Davidic messiah, they necessarily held an incomplete view of salvation and salvation history by Jewish and Christian standards (Keener, 611).

²³ But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.”

Ultimately, fleshly worship is to be rejected. For John genuine worship is impossible without the Spirit’s activity

Spirit and truth

Refer to the fellowship thus established in its life-creating and life-giving power, as leading to the fullness of God’s gifts that is no longer mediated by all sorts of provisional and symbolic forms, but by the Spirit of God himself, which is why it is repeatedly called worship of the Father (Ridderbos, 164).

Samaritan Excurses

In the NT times the Samaritan were a substantial religious group inhabiting parts of the central hill country of Samaria between Galilee to the north and Judea to the south. Physically they focused on Mt. Gerizim while religiously, the focus of their faith was on a form of the law of Moses, which differed slightly from the form of the Pentateuch familiar to us (DOJG, 832).

Samaritans have always believed that they are direct descendants of the faithful nucleus of ancient Israel. For them, therefore, the question of origins should be directed more toward Judaism than to themselves.

Josephus links of origins of the Samaritans with the account of 2 Kings 17:24-41. Following the Assyrians colonization of the northern kingdom, these colonists adopted the Israelite faith, and their descendants became the Samaritans of later times. To further add division, the priest Manasseh was expelled from Jerusalem in Nehemiah 13:28 and built a rival priesthood and sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim. Central Samaritan beliefs: on God, Moses the prophet, in the law, and in Mount Gerizim as the place appointed by God for sacrifice.

Samaritans were intensely religious and had their own scribes who interpreted the Samaritan Pentateuch.

John 7:37 On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

Most important Day

It is now the last and greatest day of the festival. Every day during Tabernacles, priests marched in solemn procession from the pool of Siloam to the temple and poured out water at the base of the altar. The seventh day of the festival, the last day proper (Lev. 23:34, 41-42), was marked by a special water-pouring rite and lights ceremony (m. Sukkah 4.1, 9-10). See ECNT, 239.

On the seven days of the Feast, a golden flagon was filled with water from the pool of Siloam and was carried in a procession led by the High Priest back to the temple. As the procession approached the Watergate on the south side of the inner court three blasts from the shofar - a trumpet connected with joyful occasions - were sounded. While the pilgrims watched, the priests processed around the altar with the flagon, the temple choir singing the Hallel (Pss. 113-118; cf. Mishnah Sukkah 4:9). When the choir reached Psalm 118, every male pilgrim shook a lûlab (willow and myrtle twigs tied with palm) in his right hand, while his left raised a piece of citrus fruit (a sign of the ingathered harvest), and all cried 'Give thanks to the Lord! three times. The water was offered to God at the time of the morning sacrifice, along with the daily drink-offering (of wine). The wine and the water were poured into their respective silver bowls, and then poured out before the Lord (PNTC, 323).

Thirsts

Interestingly enough, Jesus assumes that worshipers in the Temple would be thirsty.

If Isaiah could invite the thirsty to drink from the waters (Is. 55:1), Jesus announces that he is the one who can provide the waters (PNTC, 323).

There are good reasons for revising the traditional punctuation of Jesus' invitation, so that it runs (Bruce, 181):

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me;
And let him drink who believes in me.

It is from no earthly Jerusalem that the living waters go forth; it is from the dwelling-place of God in lives that are consecrated to him, in believing hearts where Christ has taken up his abode (Bruce, 181).

³⁸ The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” ³⁹ He said this about the Spirit. Those who believed

in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Living Water

It is generally assumed that Jesus' invitation to come and drink was prompted by the water ceremonies of the feast. Living, that is, running, water was the image of refreshment and revitalization, and this was symbolized by the pouring out of water during Tabernacles. Hence by inviting the thirsty to himself Jesus clearly indicated that what was sought and celebrated during the feast found its fulfillment in him. He was not only the temple (2:20ff.) but also the feast, the dispenser of refreshing and life-giving water as the great eschatological gift of God (Ridderbos, 273).

Of the extant gospels, only John reports water flowing from Jesus' side (19:34): if Revelation stems from the same community as this Gospel, John may be declaring that from the throne of God and of the lamb flows the water of the river of life (Rev 22:1).²¹⁰ Rev 22:1 probably reveals to us the eschatological significance of John's language here, but Revelation also applies the eschatological language to a present realization in 22:17. See Keener, 724.

Illustrations

“Thirst – When the Body Cries Out”

Every one of us knows what it feels like to be thirsty.

Not just mildly wanting something to drink—but that deep, dry, almost desperate craving where your whole body begins to signal: *“Something is not right.”*

Your mouth dries out.

Your energy dips.

Your focus fades.

And if you ignore it long enough, your entire system begins to weaken.

Now here’s what’s fascinating:

That feeling is not casual.

It is not accidental.

It is by design.

God has hardwired your body with a built-in warning system. Deep inside your brain—in the hypothalamus—there are tiny sensors constantly evaluating your internal condition. They are measuring, assessing, watching.

And the moment your body begins to lose water...

the moment things drift out of balance...

a signal is sent.

Drink.

You don’t vote on it.

You don’t schedule it.

You don’t reason your way into it.

You feel it.

It presses on you.

It interrupts you.

It demands your attention.

Why?

Because your body was not created to function without water.
You can ignore the signal—but you cannot outlive the need.

Adipsia (Hypodipsia)

- **Primary condition:** Adipsia
- This is a rare disorder where a person has **little or no sensation of thirst**, even when the body is dehydrated.

“Thirst – Your Soul Works the Same Way”

As surely as God has made your body for water,
so He has made your soul for Himself.

Not for mere religion.

Not for outward form.

But for **God—His presence, His favor, His glory.**

Man is not a self-sustaining creature.

He is a dependent being, and his highest dependency is not physical, but spiritual.

And when the soul is estranged from God—
when it wanders from the fountain of its life—
there arises within it a thirst no earthly stream can quench.

Oh, how this thirst manifests itself:

- A restless spirit that finds no abiding peace
- A troubled heart that cannot be quieted
- A ceaseless pursuit of satisfaction that ever eludes the grasp

The man acquires, and yet he lacks.

He indulges, and yet he hungers.

He fills his hands, but his heart remains empty.

And what shall we say of this?

It is the testimony of the soul to its Maker.

It is the echo of eternity within the breast of man.

It is the soul, though fallen, still bearing witness:

“I was made for God—and I have Him not.”

Broken Cisterns (Modern Wells That Don't Satisfy)

Below are the primary “false wells” people drink from today, with research behind each one.

1. Social Media & Digital Connection

Promise: “You will be seen, known, and connected.”

Reality: Increased loneliness and comparison.

- Higher social media use is **associated with higher loneliness**
- Gen Z reports loneliness **despite constant online interaction**
- “Curated lives” create **comparison, FOMO, and inadequacy**

Why it fails:

It simulates connection without requiring vulnerability.

2. Achievement & Productivity

Promise: “If you accomplish enough, you will matter.”

Reality: Burnout, anxiety, and emptiness.

- Workplace loneliness is rising and costs billions in productivity
- People need **purpose and belonging**, not just output

Why it fails:

It gives identity based on performance—never secure, always fragile.

3. Romantic Relationships as Ultimate Fulfillment

Promise: “If I find the right person, I’ll be whole.”

Reality: Pressure, instability, disappointment.

- Loneliness drivers in Gen Z include **being single, low self-esteem, anxiety**

Why it fails:

It asks another broken person to carry divine-level expectations.

4. Entertainment & Escapism

Promise: “You can distract your pain away.”

Reality: Numbness, not healing.

- High digital consumption correlates with **lower well-being and increased isolation** (multiple studies summarized in social media research)

Why it fails:

Distraction suppresses thirst—it doesn’t satisfy it.

5. Individualism & Radical Independence

Promise: “You don’t need anyone—you define yourself.”

Reality: Isolation and fragile identity.

- Younger adults are **more likely to feel lonely than older adults**

Why it fails:

Humans are wired for dependence and community—not autonomy alone.

6. Artificial/Simulated Relationships (AI, parasocial ties)

Promise: “You can have connection without risk.”

Reality: Increased emotional dependence and isolation.

- Heavy AI/chatbot users often show **greater loneliness and fewer real relationships**

Why it fails:

It replaces real presence with controllable illusion.

Generational Breakdown (What Each Generation “Drinks From”)

Gen Z (≈1997–2012)

- **Most connected, most lonely**
- 67% report loneliness
- Only 15% say they’ve *never* felt lonely

Primary cisterns:

- Social media identity
- Digital relationships
- Validation (likes, followers)

Core issue:

Identity without rootedness → constant comparison → emptiness

Millennials (≈1981–1996)

- High loneliness (~65%)

Primary cisterns:

- Career success
- Experiences (travel, lifestyle)
- Delayed life milestones

Core issue:

Achievement without fulfillment → success without satisfaction

Gen X (≈1965–1980)

- Moderate loneliness, especially midlife

Primary cisterns:

- Work identity
- Family pressure
- Self-reliance

Core issue:

Responsibility without renewal → fatigue and quiet isolation

Baby Boomers (≈1946–1964)

- Lower reported loneliness (~44%)
- But loneliness can be more **physically damaging**

Primary cisterns:

- Legacy
- Stability
- Routine

Core issue:

Loss of roles (retirement, aging) → meaning crisis

1. Current Congress (2025–2027)

- House median age: **~57.5 years**
- Senate median age: **~64.7 years**
- Overall average: roughly **58–59 years**

👉 This makes the current Congress:

- **One of the oldest (top 2–3) in U.S. history**
-

2. Compared to Recent Decades (1980s → Today)

The aging trend is very clear:

- House average age:
 - ~50.7 years (1987)
 - ~57–58 years (2025)
- Senate average age:
 - ~54.4 years (1987)
 - ~63–64 years (2025)

Here's a clean **top 10 list of specific foods that tend to make you the thirstiest:**

1. **Potato chips** – extremely high in sodium
2. **Pepperoni pizza** – salty meat + greasy cheese combo
3. **Pretzels** – dry texture and heavy salt
4. **French fries** – salt-coated and easy to overeat quickly
5. **Ramen (instant or restaurant)** – very high-sodium broth
6. **Bacon** – cured and packed with salt
7. **Candy (especially gummy or sour)** – high sugar pulls water from cells
8. **Fried chicken** – salt + fat slows digestion and increases thirst
9. **Spicy wings** – capsaicin triggers heat and thirst response
10. **Beef jerky** – concentrated salt and very dry