

28/August /2022

Cracked Cisterns

By Rev. Edgar F. Solis

Introduction:

Water is the most vital element of life. We all know that water is essential to all human development and activities.

Let's remember that our bodies are made of 70% water!

I come from a dry land, where collecting and saving this essential element is more than necessary. What would you do if you lived where collecting and storing water was a regular practice essential to survival?

Context:

In Bible times, a cistern was an artificial reservoir dug into the earth or carved into the rock to collect and store water.

Israel has a long dry season with relatively few natural springs, so catching winter rain in cisterns was vital.

Fresh water was precious, so a *broken* cistern was practically worthless. Cracked rock or crumbling masonry could hold only a small amount of dirty water - or maybe no water at all.

Collecting and storing water in a broken cistern was about as practical as using a sieve for a canteen!

The prophet Jeremiah used the illustration of "broken cisterns" to point out the extreme foolishness of God's people, Israel.

The message was given as a rebuke to people who were no longer committed to God.

Jeremiah preached in a day when the people of Judah, the southern portion of the nation of Israel, had turned away from God to do their own thing.

They were no longer devoted to the Lord or depending on Him to meet their spiritual needs. The Bible passage tells us they had created “cisterns” for themselves, hoping that their broken cisterns could satisfy their needs.

These cisterns didn’t break after holding water for a while. They *never* held any water! They were broken from the day they were built and could never satisfy the people’s spiritual thirst.

Theological Reflection:

This reminds me of a poem from the Mexican poet Amado Nervo.

Useless is the fever that quickens your step.

no source can quench your anxiety,

no matter how much you drink...

the soul is a glass that is only filled with eternity.

This is always true of our self-made schemes to find spiritual fulfillment apart from God. Only God Himself can quench our spiritual thirst.

And that message certainly can be applied to believers today.

Are we also building our artificial spiritual reservoir? And as a logical consequence, are we rejecting the water that comes from God?

Imagine a thirsty person in a parched land, ignoring a bubbling spring of cool water, only to hack out a cistern in the blazing sun hoping to collect some rainwater!

Without a natural spring nearby, a cistern would be the best thing you could do.

If you were unaware of a nearby spring, at least you could be pitied for your diligent efforts to try to collect some water.

But if you did know that there was a fresh spring available, and you deliberately turned your back to build a cistern, you would be incredibly foolish.

God painted this picture in words to show His people how utterly foolish they were when they turned away from Him.

The surrounding heathen nations could at least be pitied when they ignorantly followed lifeless gods that couldn't meet their spiritual thirst.

And unlike Judah, these pagan nations were *loyal* to their gods (Jeremiah 2:10-11). The people of Judah deliberately turned away from what they *knew* was their source of Living Water.

The heavens were called on to be appalled and "shudder with great horror" at such foolishness, stupidity, and evil (Jeremiah 2:12).

Is it possible that some people today are doing this same thing? Have we wandered away from the Fountain to search for tasty water elsewhere?

Have we foolishly built our cisterns?

From where are we drinking water?

Application:

Let's apply God's broken cistern message to our lives, church, and nation.

Today, we can find people drinking the poisoned water of individualism, Christian nationalism, exclusivity, self-righteousness, greed, and religious abandonment of mission and service.

Dear church if we are moving forward in our ministry after the global pandemic and other challenges, we need to return to the living water of Jesus, we need to drink from the cistern of God.

God is calling us to return to the pure water of God's presence, but this reality can change all aspects of our life!

A person who encounters God and drinks from God's living water cannot remain the same! We are transformed when we receive God's presence!

In the same way, you need to breathe pure air using a mask in an aircraft during an emergency to help others, the church needs to breathe the new and pure air of the Holy Spirit.

The church today needs to drink the pure water that comes from God to quench our many thirsts and to share the good news message of Jesus Christ.

That message can transform people's lives.

It can change our communities for good and bring new hope for the world!

Amen!