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## BROKEN CISTERNS?

Need help?  
Prayer?  
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One of the consistent themes of the Old Testament that we still see today is idolatry in God's people. Simply put, idolatry is anything we serve other than God Almighty. That sin is compounded when we attempt to syncretize idolatrous ideas with the things of a holy God.

In Jeremiah 2:13, God clearly identifies Israel's condition in two ways, "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

God is addressing the sin of forsaking (leaving) Him to pursue and serve worthless idols. In this text, broken cisterns are analogous to idols created from the land or earthly wisdom. These idols, steeped in worldly values, have been far too prominent in God's Church! Idolatrous thinking has infested the Church of today with the psychology of consumerism and a strategy of sensual appeal, casting the Church as a brand of man rather than the bride of Christ. In our attempt to be trendy, we often exchange godliness for cleverness, ending up with customers of a church brand rather than disciples of Christ (Matthew 28:19). In the busyness of hewing the next big attraction, the message of the Gospel gets hidden. The methodology of cisterns of crafty attractions will draw people in, but will they find Jesus? Worship becomes a production event, and small group instruction becomes no more than a Sunday morning or weekday social feast because of the infestation of idolatry.

We're trapped in our own belief that these cisterns (idols) are so essential to people attending that we're more afraid of people not showing up than the Holy Spirit not showing up. It seems we've become preoccupied with filling seats rather than feeding sheep. My brothers, we must stand firm on what is of first importance—the Gospel!

Read what the Apostle Paul says: "...I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins...that He was buried...that He was raised on the third day..." (1 Cor. 15:3-4). That's it, plain and simple! True ministry should flow from living waters of truth and, as shepherds, we are laborers in the Gospel, not architects of it; valets of the Gospel, not vision

casters; entrusted stewards of the Gospel, but not the Savior—ones who must give an account.

So then, what must be our biblical resolve? First, if we're guilty of forsaking God, we need to stop right now, repent, and ask His forgiveness. God created us with a need for a divine spiritual relationship that thrives on truth. When the people abandon the living water, they die spiritually. Are we unburdened by the number of our churches dying? By pastor burnout? Are we killing our own churches with a worthless cistern mentality? The call is not to lift up our brand but to lift up the name of Jesus (John 12:32). Paul says it again in 2 Cor. 4:5, "... For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord..." There is only one place to get living water that brings life, and His name is Jesus (John 4:13-14)!

Secondly, God tells Israel that hewing broken cisterns (idols) is evil, built on self-centeredness. It's sin! The idolatrous cistern thinking in our hearts will eventually emerge as idols in our ministry to God. An even greater tragedy is the unwillingness to acknowledge and repent of methods and ministry that do not honor God—they anger Him. Our God is a jealous God and will not share His glory with idols (Ex. 20:5)! Will our arrogance in practicing idolatry invite His judgment?

Brothers, sound the alarm. It is time to closely examine what we put before God and His people as the Gospel and, with repentant hearts, come boldly to the throne of grace. Is the Jesus we present to the church and the world distorted, diluted, or deformed because of our cisterns? If so, do you hear the voice of God commanding repentance from His Church? If you do hear His voice today, repent—call your church to corporate repentance so that a time of refreshing may come (Acts 3:19). Tear down the idol-laden ways, shut down the waterless worship and the lifeless programming of ministry so that the glorious light of God and His Christ might rest and abide in our land! He stands waiting!

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*All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV).*