

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 307 – Woe To The Pastors Through Everlasting Reproach (Jeremiah 23:1-40)

1. Did God plan to replace Israel's shepherds?

Yes: *"(1) Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. (2) Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. (3) And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. (4) And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD"* (**Jeremiah 23:1-4**).

- Woe to the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of God (**Jeremiah 50:6** and **Ezekiel 34:1-16**).
- Consider Jesus looking upon the shepherdless people lest we think God didn't want overseers among His people (**Matthew 9:36-39**).
- The shepherds were going to answer for scattering the sheep (**Jeremiah 10:21-22**).
- The remnant would be gathered back to God (**Ecclesiastes 8:12**, **Isaiah 1:9**, **Isaiah 37:31**, **Jeremiah 15:11**, and **Romans 11:1-5**).
- God is going to see to the sheep (**Isaiah 40:11**). This could be in reference even to the N.T. (**I Peter 5:1-4**) as God put in place clear qualifications to His shepherds (**I Timothy 3:1-7** add **Titus 1:5-9**). The next two verses certainly point to this.

2. In whose days would Judah be saved?

The days of the righteous Branch: *"(5) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. (6) In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"* (**Jeremiah 23:5-6**).

- This is a prophesy about Christ (**Matthew 1:1**, **Matthew 1:21-23**, **Luke 1:31-32**, **Revelation 22:16**, **II Timothy 4:8**, **Luke 19:1-10**, and **I Corinthians 1:30**).

3. Where would they remember being brought up out of rather than Egypt?

The north country: *"(7) Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; (8) But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land"* (**Jeremiah 23:7-8**).

- They once recalled their coming out of Egypt (**Psalms 81:10, Psalms 114:1-2, and Jeremiah 11:3-4**).
- They came out of the north country (Babylon; **Jeremiah 25:9**) is to be remembered (**Ezekiel 39:27-28**). God planned to save them (**Jeremiah 42:11**).

4. What was causing Jeremiah heartache and internal shaking?

What the false prophets were doing to the people: *“(9) Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness. (10) For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. (11) For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD. (12) Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. (13) And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. (14) I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah” (Jeremiah 23:9-14).*

- The false prophets (**Jeremiah 14:14 and Jeremiah 27:14-17**) were causing the people to continue in sin rather than to repent from their sins (**Jeremiah 6:13-14 and Ezekiel 13:10-23**).

5. Was God indifferent concerning the false prophets?

No, He was certainly not indifferent about the false prophets. He was going to execute judgment on them furiously: *“(15) Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. (16) Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. (17) They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. (18) For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? (19) Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. (20) The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. (21) I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. (22) But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings” (Jeremiah 23:15-22).*

- False teaching does not go unpunished (**Deuteronomy 13:1-5, Jeremiah 8:11-22, Jeremiah 28:15-17, and II Peter 2:1-9**).

6. Were the false prophets able to hide their actions or thoughts from God?

No: *“(23) Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? (24) Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. (25) I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. (26) How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; (27) Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal” (Jeremiah 23:23-27).*

- They needed to understand that God wasn't so far away (**Acts 17:27**) that He was clueless to what was going on (**Proverbs 5:21, Jeremiah 16:17, and Hebrews 4:13**).
- You cannot hide from God (**Isaiah 29:15**) as He is essentially present everywhere (**Psalms 139:1-12**).
- He is watching everything (**II Chronicles 16:9, Proverbs 15:3, and Jeremiah 32:19**).
- He knows when they did evil and He acted (**Amos 9:1-6**).
- From our hearts to our words, God knows all (**I Samuel 16:7, I Chronicles 28:9, Psalms 7:9, Proverbs 17:3, Jeremiah 17:10, Hebrews 4:13, and Revelation 2:23**).

7. While God let them speak, what profit were the false prophets to their hearers?

None: *“(28) The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. (29) Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? (30) Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. (31) Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. (32) Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:28-32).*

- God let them talk (**Matthew 15:14**).
- God's word likened to fire and a hammer (**Jeremiah 5:14, Jeremiah 20:9, Romans 1:16-17, Ephesians 6:17, and Hebrews 4:12**).
- The false words of the prophets were nothing, they would profit the people nothing (**Jeremiah 2:11, Lamentations 2:14, and Ephesians 5:6**).

8. What was God's answer to "What is the burden of the Lord"?

Since it was not His message to begin with, yet they spoke and believed it anyway, God said He would forsake them and bring an everlasting reproach upon them. The error of the people was in believing the prophets that were falsely speaking in the name of the Lord (context proves this out): *"(33) And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. (34) And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house. (35) Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken? (36) And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God. (37) Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken? (38) But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD; (39) Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: (40) And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten" (Jeremiah 23:33-40).*

- God had long ago told them He would forsake them if they followed false gods (**Deuteronomy 31:15-18**).
- Their history showed them what God does in times such as this (**Deuteronomy 32:15-26**).
- Those who spoke for God, unauthorized to do so (**Deuteronomy 18:18-22**), would be punished (**Ezekiel 14:9-10**).
- Their words would come back to haunt them (**Isaiah 3:8-11** and **Matthew 12:34-37**).
- They should have inquired what God said, not what the prophets themselves said (**I Kings 22:14**).
- Because of their sayings against the will of the Lord, they were to face and unending reproach (**Jeremiah 20:11** and **Jeremiah 24:9-10**). Remember, this 70-year period (**Jeremiah 29:10-11**) would see the end of the generation that had erred.