

# CHRISTIANITY IN TROUBLED TIMES

## “Woe to the Shepherds”

Scripture Reading: JEREMIAH 23:1-2

- ) **SLIDE 7.** Scripture reading. (should read entire chapter)
- ) **SLIDE 8.** Today’s message is titled, “*Woe to the Shepherds.*”
- ) I grew up on a dead-end street in the 50s/60s in the midst of the baby-boomer generation. There were kids everywhere. When the children in the neighborhood misbehaved, my father had concern for all of our actions. But there were five children whose actions he had more concern about than anyone else. And who were those five children? His own. My father was far more concerned about the actions of his own children than the actions of the other riff raff in the neighborhood.
- ) Your parents were the same way. And if you are a parent, you think the same way too. Children reflect their parents. And we want them to think right, to speak right, and to act right.
- ) God is no different. He has those He calls His own. From the OT, it was the nation Israel. In the NT, it is the church. God is far more concerned about the thoughts, the words, and the actions of His own children, than those outside His family.
- ) And to keep His children on the straight and narrow, there are those who are in the position of proclaiming the Word of God to the people of God. In the OT, they were called prophets. In the NT, they are called preachers and pastors. They have a task to do in the name of the Lord. They are to be shepherds of the flock—to proclaim the truth of the Word of God and lead the people into green pastures. The TRUTH matters.
- ) And they better meet the qualifications of the position, and they better do it right. There are consequences for failure.

- ) Unfortunately, as we all know, there are too many who fail at this. They are not qualified to speak for the Lord. And when they speak, they fail to proclaim the truth or the full counsel. They are not true shepherds. They are merely hired hands.
- ) Over the past 4 weeks he have been talking about how the USA has become a substitute society because we suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Therefore God has reached His breaking point and is removing His restraining grace to allow us to go our own way.
- ) I'm convinced that it is important to look at Biblical history to show you that when a people that God has called to be His own (Israel) suppresses the truth in unrighteousness and become a substitute society like Israel did many years ago, God will reach His breaking point and unleash His wrath.
- ) **SLIDE 9**. Basics. Not all Israel is Israel. Genuine and fakes. Explain. Abraham's children.
- ) Because if you say you are Israel, then here's how you need to think, speak, and act, and here's what you must believe. Why? Because you represent God. Was this happening? Let's look at what God said about prophets.
- ) **SLIDE 10**. In the OT, God had requirements and expectations of the prophets and the people. Read DEUT 18:18-20. What can we learn from this?
- ) **SLIDE 11**. Who raises up the prophets? God. Prophets were not self-appointed.
- ) **SLIDE 12**. What shall this prophet speak? Whatever God tells them to speak.
- ) **SLIDE 13**. Should the hearer heed the words of the prophet? Yes. God requires the people to listen and obey.
- ) **SLIDE 14**. Are there prophets who are not authorized by God who do not speak the Word of God? Yes.

- ) **SLIDE 15.** Is there a penalty for falsely speaking for God? Yes. Death. God had no problem with capital punishment.
- ) **SLIDE 16.** Should the people question the words of the prophet? Yes.
- ) **SLIDE 17.** How will the people know what the prophet said is true or not? Does the prophecy come true?
- ) **SLIDE 18.** There is another place in DEUT 13 that speaks to prophets. What are the false prophets saying? Read. We are being tested as to what god we really want to serve.
- ) **SLIDE 19.** What becomes of a false prophet who leads others to false gods? PURGE THE EVIL!
- ) That's the background on OT prophets. Today, let's look at this entire 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter from JEREMIAH, pick out a few verses, and talk about how God responded to these OT false prophets.
- ) **SLIDE 20.** First, a little background. Who was Jeremiah? Called to be a prophet of God before he was in his mother's womb (1:5). He was a prophet to God's nation of Israel for over 50 years—from around 627BC through 570BC. He prophesized the fall and exile of Judah which occurred in 586BC. We can read about this in 2KINGS 22-25.
- ) We know this. God is concerned about His people, the nation Israel. It's up to the shepherds to tend the sheep.
- ) But as I said earlier, not everyone is qualified to be a shepherd. And many who claim to be shepherds are propagating lies and false gods. In this chapter, the Lord commands Jeremiah, a true prophet, to rebuke these false shepherds (prophets).
- ) **SLIDE 21.** Shepherds who scatter the sheep of God by not attending to them perform an **EVIL** deed. Therefore, God will attend to those who do not attend to God's sheep. We just read the qualifications for prophets and how the people need to respond.

- ) **SLIDE 22.** By this time of Jeremiah, these laws are not being followed or enforced. Let's move on to verses 10 and 11.
- ) **SLIDE 23.** So, what do we have now? Prophets and priests are corrupted. The priests are the ones to enforce the laws spoken by the prophets. But when the priests are corrupt, the false prophets can say whatever they want to say. Cahoots.
- ) **SLIDE 24.** What happens when prophets and priests fail to be shepherds of God's people? The land becomes full of adulterers. The people do evil in the sight of the Lord.
- ) **SLIDE 25.** What happens when the people become adulterers and do evil in the sight of the Lord? God removes His hand of provision and His restraining grace.
- ) In LEVITICUS 26, God lays out blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The blessings are found in verses 1 through 13. The curses in verses 14 through 39. These curses you see here in JEREMIAH are a direct result of the curses outlined in LEVITICUS due to disobedience.
- ) **SLIDE 26.** Let's move on to verse 14. Read.
- ) **SLIDE 27.** The prophets, the ones who are supposedly speaking the Words of God, are actually encouraging the people to do evil. And what happens in response? No one turns away from evil. Why? Because people love their sin. And all the people need is for someone in religious authority to tell them that something which is wrong is now right.
- ) **SLIDE 28.** What was the sin of Sodom? It wasn't the lack of hospitality as the LGBTQ community wants us to believe. It was the perverse sin of homosexuality. Do we see this in America today?
- ) **SLIDE 29.** Is everyone that speaks for the Lord qualified to speak for the Lord? No. God neither sent them nor did they seek God's counsel when speaking. Dangerous.

- ) **SLIDE 30.** In verse 2 God says He will attend to those who shepherds who have scattered the flock with their evil deeds. Here's the justice. Read.
- ) **SLIDE 31.** What is the Lord's response? In wrath. Do we remember that from ROMANS 1:18. The "what" of God is being revealed from heaven? The WRATH of God.
- ) **SLIDE 32.** Did these false prophets (shepherds) and Israelites believe they would escape the wrath of God? Probably so. People love doing evil in the sight of the Lord. But God's plan and purposes will be accomplished.
- ) There comes a time when God reaches His breaking point. That is not a good thing. And God has reached His breaking point with these false prophets and disobedient Israelites (those who call themselves God's people. Not all Israel is Israel). Woe to the shepherds!
- ) We read Biblical history and we know what happens after this. The wrath of God comes in the form of exile. The Southern Kingdom of Judah is exiled in 586BC to Babylon. When false prophets lead people down a path of destruction, the wrath of God isn't far off.
- ) **SLIDE 33.** HEBREWS 10:31. "*It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" This verse speaks for itself.
- ) Next week we will use what we learned here today about God's people of Israel and their prophets and make some Biblical comparisons with the church today.

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