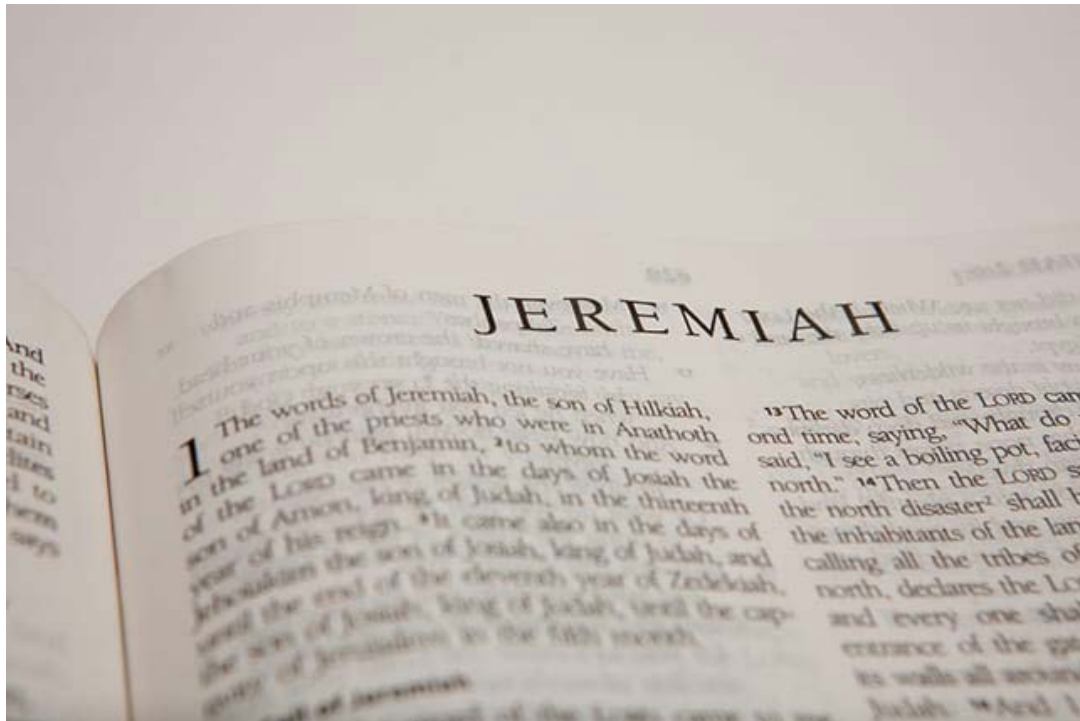


THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH
SHEPHERDS FALSE AND TRUE:
JEREMIAH 22, 23



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Shepherds False and True: Jeremiah 22, 23

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Introduction to Jeremiah 22, 23

Judah's problem was that false shepherds had been leading them for nearly a generation. Priests, prophets, and kings, set in place by God to watch over His flock, had instead betrayed the people of God to false deities, vain hopes, lying dreams, and wicked ways.

And now God had had enough. Jeremiah offered King Zedekiah a review of recent history in the hope of turning his heart back to God. But it was no use. The nation was about to collapse, and the throne of David would go vacant for hundreds of years.

But God would not forget His Word. He would appoint a proper King to rule His people, and with Him He would send faithful shepherds to guard and nurture His flocks. Jesus, the apostles, and faithful pastors and teachers down through the ages were already in God's mind as the people of Judah prepared to endure God's wrath.

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1 The Lesson of History

Pray Psalm 132.8-10

Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your saints should for joy.
For Your servant David's sake,
Do not turn away the face of Your anointed.

Sing Psalm 132.8-10

(Finlandia: : [*Be Still My Soul*](#))

Arise, O Lord, come to Your resting place;
Your holy presence meet with us in might.
Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus' grace,
and we will shout to Your divine delight!
For David's sake, turn not away Your face,
but look upon us in Your holy light.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 22.1-10.

Prepare.

1. Read Psalm 132. What did God promise to Zedekiah in our text for today?
2. Did the Lord expect Zedekiah to believe Him (vv. 6-11)?

Meditate.

The philosopher George Santayana wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Jeremiah 22 and 23 are a study in that sad truth; together, they urge us both to remember the past and learn from it, and to cling to the promises of God with renewed commitment and vigor.

We recall that, at this time in Jeremiah's ministry, Zedekiah was king over Jerusalem and Judah (cf. Jer. 21.30). Already, by this time, Josiah's son Shallum had been carried away to Egypt, never to return. Jehoiakim, who succeeded him, had been taken away to Babylon at Nebuchadnezzar's first incursion into Judah. And his son, Jehoiachin (Coniah), was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar when he returned to plunder the temple (we'll see more about these events as we work our way through Jeremiah 22).

So Zedekiah was king over Jerusalem and Judah at this time, and Nebuchadnezzar returned for what would be his final assault against Jerusalem. The results of this siege would be disastrous. Zedekiah has not listened to Jeremiah thus far, and, as we shall see, he will not listen to him from this point forward. He will learn nothing from Jeremiah's brief history lesson, and he will pay a terrible price for his willful ignorance.

Even so, God continued to send Jeremiah to the king, holding out the promise sung about in Psalm 132, that God would bless David's offspring to the extent that they remained faithful to Him (Jer. 22.1-4). In his own living memory, Zedekiah had seen the demise of three of his predecessors. But he learned nothing. He would not "hear these words" from the Lord (v. 5); and so, he could expect that God would judge him as surely as He had judged the three kings before him.

Zedekiah was about to squander the last best hope for the people of God. God was preparing a desolation so complete and so bitter, that the surround nations would marvel and be amazed (vv. 6-11). Zedekiah's fate

would be more terrible than that of his forebears, for he would be made to watch as his sons – heirs to the throne of David – were slaughtered before his eyes. And that would be the last thing Zedekiah would ever see, as Nebuchadnezzar blinded him immediately thereafter (2 Kgs. 25.6, 7).

Will we make the same mistake of being ignorant of or indifferent to our history as God's people? The record shows that when the Church is faithful to God and His covenant, blessings abound; but when we drift, or turn our backs on God and His Word, then judgment falls, just as God promises. God is faithful to His Word, and the record of our history demonstrates that in every generation.

Reflect.

1. Why would it be important or Christians to know something about Church history?
2. What have you learned from your own personal history with the Lord and His Word?
3. How might you begin to learn more about God's history with His people throughout the ages?

*The Prophet is again bidden to reprove the king and his counsellors; but the exhortation is at the same time extended to the whole people. It was necessary to begin with the head, that the common people might know that it was not a matter to be trifled with, as God would not spare, no, not even the king himself, and his courtiers; for a greater terror seized the lower orders, when they saw the highest laid prostrate. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Jeremiah 22.1**

Thank You, Lord, for Your faithfulness to Your Word; help me to be faithful as I...

Pray Psalm 132.11-18.

Pray for your church, and for all believers, that they will be faithful in keeping covenant with God, and that we may all increase in our sanctification and in shining our lamp for the Lord.

Sing Psalm 132.11-18.

Psalm 132.11-18 (Finlandia: [Be Still My Soul](#))

Remember, Lord, the oath You swore to David;
do not turn back, do not deny Your Word:
“One of your sons, with your throne I will favor,
and he shall keep My cov'nant evermore,
and walk within My testimonies ever,
Thus He shall ever rule as Israel's Lord.”

God dwells among us, and He will forever,
to meet our needs and cloth us with His grace.
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior,
and made us His eternal resting-place.
His foes are banished from His presence ever,
but we shall reign with Him before His face.

2 Shallow as Shallum?

Pray 140.6-8.

I said to the LORD: “You *are* my God;
Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.
O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
You have covered my head in the day of battle.
Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
Do not further his *wicked* scheme,
Lest they be exalted.”

Sing Psalm 140.6-8.

(Old Rockingham: [*O Lord Most High, with All My Heart*](#))

You are my God, O God, my Lord!
Give ear, show mercy to my pleas!
Salvation grant by Your strong Word;
grant not their wicked, evil schemes.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 22.11-17.

Prepare.

1. Read 2 Kings 23.31-33. What happened to Shallum (Jehoahaz)? Why?
2. How did Shallum’s father, Josiah, show that he truly knew the Lord?

Meditate.

We recall from Jeremiah 1.1-3 that our prophet’s ministry began during the days of King Josiah and lasted through to the last days of Zedekiah. Josiah made a sincere effort to serve the Lord and set the nation on a proper path (vv. 15, 16; cf. 2 Kgs. 22, 23). He knew the Lord and wanted to do whatever God’s Law required.

Josiah’s son Shallum – or Jehoahaz – rebelled against his father’s policies and practices, and sought only comfort, unrighteousness, and self-indulgence (vv. 13, 14, 17). For his wickedness, he was taken captive by the Pharaoh of Egypt, after only three months on the throne. He never returned to Judah again (v. 11).

Jeremiah here recalled God’s Word to Shallum through the prophet, to jog Zedekiah’s memory of how he came to be king in the first place. Shallum thought only about himself, whereas Josiah sought the wellbeing of the nation. The implied question is: Zedekiah, which of these examples will you follow?

The history of the Christian movement offers abundant opportunities for us to learn how to follow the Lord – what to believe, how to conduct our lives, how to carry out our mission. We are truly shallow (like Shallum) if we measure our faith by outward things – numbers, nice facilities, and the like. What God is looking for is “justice and righteousness” (v. 15). We can learn much about these from our forebears in the faith, if we are willing to consider the lessons of our history.

Reflect.

1. How do people in our day determine the health of a local church?
2. What does it mean to “know” the Lord? How can you tell if a congregation truly knows the Lord?

3. What can you do to encourage your fellow believers to grow in knowing the Lord (2 Pt. 3:18)?

"Inquire the cause, and you will find it to be this — he faithfully discharged his duties, for he executed judgment and justice. As, then, thou seest that the equity and moderation which thy father had practiced, was the cause of his happy life, why dost not thou also imitate him?" John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Jeremiah 22:15, 16*

Help me to follow the example of Josiah and other faithful believers, Lord, as I...

Pray Psalm 140.1-5, 12, 13.

Give thanks to the Lord for His abundant lovingkindness. Commit to serving Him according to His Word.

Sing Psalm 140.1-5, 12, 13.

Psalm 140.1-5, 12, 13 (Old Rockingham: [*O Lord Most High, with All My Heart*](#))

From evil, violent men, I pray,
deliver me, preserve me, Lord!
Their hearts they bend to evil ways,
and serpent's venom is their word.

Guard me, O Lord, from wicked hands,
from violent men preserve my life!
They sow my path with wicked plans,
with nets and snares and cords of strife.

The Lord, I know, my cause shall take,
and justice for me surely do;
The righteous will thanksgiving make,
the upright e'er shall dwell with You.

3 Remember Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin

Pray Psalm 2.7-10.

“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”
Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

Sing Psalm 2.7-10.

(Agincourt: [O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High](#))

Proclaim the message far and wide, that God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav’n He sent us His only Son, Who has for us salvation won.

To Christ the Lord be given all Who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 22.18-30.

Prepare.

1. Read 2 Kings 23.33-24.11. What happened to these kings? Why?
2. Read 2 Kings 24.12-20. How did Zedekiah become King of Judah?

Meditate.

Jeremiah’s history lesson continues as he recalls the two kings who immediately preceded Zedekiah, Jehoiakim and Coniah (Jehoiachin). Each had succumbed to the power of Nebuchadnezzar and the forces of Babylon.

Jehoiakim would be utterly forgotten by God’s people (Jer. 22.18, 19). The reason? He and the people he led refused to forsake their false deities and return to the Lord (vv. 20-23).

Enter Jehoiachin (Coniah). He was so awful – “a despised, broken idol” (v. 28) – that the Lord would not even acknowledge him as a signet on His hand (v. 24). God had “no pleasure” in this vessel (v. 28); He cast him and his descendants out of Jerusalem and into the hands of the Babylonians. Coniah would be without a child to inherit the throne of David (v. 30). Was the promise of Psalm 132 being forfeited?

No, it was being fulfilled, both by the Lord setting aside those descendants of David who refused to serve Him, and by leaving the throne of Israel vacant for more than 400 years. Thus God created anticipation for a coming King of Israel, and Jesus would claim that throne by His life, death, and resurrection.

The false kings were being taken out of the way. The true King was yet to come. God Himself would enthrone Him at His own right hand, the true Signet of the Lord (Dan. 7.13, 14; Ps. 110). And He would give Him the true Kingdom of David, to administer and advance through His faithful saints (Dan. 7.18).

Reflect.

1. What should we learn from Jeremiah's lesson about the four kings who preceded Zedekiah (Josiah, Shallum, Jehoiakim, and Coniah)?
2. God has called us to His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2.12). What does this mean for us?
3. What must we do to remain faithful to our calling from the Lord?

Since they did not imitate the piety of their ancestors though taking pride in their kinship with them—making much of Abraham, Isaac, Israel, David, Hezekiah and Josiah, men conspicuous for their virtue—for this reason the God of all rejects the arrogance of Jeconiah in these words: Even if he were a ring and were placed on my right hand, I would pull it off and hand it over to the enemy. Theodoret of Cyr (393-466), On Jeremiah 22.24025

Use me today, Lord, as a vessel of grace so that I...

Pray Psalm 2.9-12.

Praise God that He has exalted Jesus as King! Commit yourself this day to seeking Him and His Kingdom in all you do.

Sing Psalm 2.9-12.

Psalm 2.9-12 (Agincourt: [*O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High*](#))

To Christ the Lord be given all Who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Rejoice with fear in Jesus' grace, and worship before His exalted face!
Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

4 The True Shepherds

Pray Psalm 28.6, 7.

Blessed *be* the LORD,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!
The LORD *is* my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I will praise Him.

Sing Psalm 28.6, 7.

(Angel's Story: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#))

Blessed be the Name of Jesus, for He will hear our prayer.
His strength protects and shields us with mercy and with care.
In Your heart rejoices; You help us by Your Word.
To You we raise our voices to praise and thank You, Lord.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 23.1-8.

Prepare.

1. How does the Lord refer to the kings, prophets, and priests in verse 1? Why does He use that term?
2. What did God promise to do for His people?

Meditate.

Josiah was the last good king over the people of God in Judah. His son, Shallum (Jehoahaz), was exiled to Egypt, never to return to Jerusalem. Another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, was installed as king in Shallum's place. He was a puppet of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon overwhelmed him and made him his puppet. He died in rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. His son, Jehoiachin (Coniah), succeeded him to the throne of Judah. He lasted three months before Nebuchadnezzar captured him and took him to Babylon, where he died.

Nebuchadnezzar then appointed his uncle, Zedekiah, to reign in his place, as a puppet monarch to Babylon. It is to this Zedekiah Jeremiah has been rehearsing his history lesson. We have seen that Zedekiah's fate will leave the people of God without an heir apparent to the throne; no king will take the throne of David when the people return from Babylon. The throne will be vacant for more than 500 years.

But God has not forgotten His promise. He will send "a Branch of righteousness," a descendant of David (v. 5) to rule as King in judgment and righteousness, just as He had promised (Ps. 132). The coming King will bring with Him true shepherds – not like the priests, prophets, and rulers the people had known in Jeremiah's day – and they will shepherd the people of God so that that "shall be fruitful and increase" (vv. 3, 4). God will return the remnant of His people to their land, and there He will bring the true Kingdom of David to light; and all the earth will know blessing when the King, Whose Name is "The LORD Our Righteousness," comes to rule (vv. 5, 6).

In those days, there will be no more scattering of God's people to strange lands. Instead, the King and His shepherds will gather God's people "from all the countries where" He had driven and dispersed them, and they shall be one flock, one people, and one Kingdom in the salvation of the Lord (v. 6).

It's not hard to see where Jeremiah is pointing here. In the short term, a return from Babylon under the governorship of Zerubbabel (a descendant of David) is indicated. But the ultimate hope of God's people and of their salvation is in the coming King of David, our Lord Jesus Christ. He rules a Kingdom of judgment and righteousness which reaches to the ends of the earth and is administered by loving shepherds. His is a fruitful and prosperous Kingdom, where the good will and covenant promises of God abound.

Reflect.

1. What kind of Kingdom did Jesus bring with Him?
2. What is the role of Jesus' shepherds in that Kingdom? What is our role?
3. How does this Kingdom increase and expand to bless all the world?

*The church is the seed of Abraham. Jeremiah says, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when they shall no longer say, 'The Lord lives, who led the children of Israel from the north country and from every region where they had been driven.' He will restore them to their own land which he gave to their ancestors," so that we may know that he who "raises up from the stones children to Abraham" in the New Testament is he who will gather, according to the Old Testament, those who will be saved from all the nations. Irenaeus of Lyons (135-202), *Against Heresies* 5.34.1*

King Jesus, shepherd me with Your love today, and help me also to...

Pray Psalm 28.1-5, 8, 9.

Pray for the Lord to grant you strength today, and to shepherd you in His love.

Sing Psalm 28.1-5, 8, 9.

Psalm 28.1-5, 8, 9 (Angel's Story: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#))

I cry to You, our Savior, O, be not deaf to me!
Lord, speak to me with favor, lest I should dying be.
Hear now my supplications when for Your help I cry.
Receive these, my oblations, before Your throne on high.

Lord, count me not among those who walk in sinful ways.
With words of peace their tongue glows while evil fills their days.
Your works they disregard, Lord, while evil fills their hands.
Destroy them by Your Word, Lord, and let them no more stand.

Our strength are You, O Savior, our strong defense and sure.
Anointed with Your favor, we rest in You secure.
Save us, and bless us, Jesus, upon us turn Your face.
With shepherd's care, Lord, keep us forever in Your grace.

5 False Prophets

Pray Psalm 7.1-5.

O LORD my God, in You I put my trust;
Save me from all those who persecute me;
And deliver me,
Lest they tear me like a lion,
Rending *me* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.
O LORD my God, if I have done this:
If there is iniquity in my hands,
If I have repaid evil to him who was at peace with me,
Or have plundered my enemy without cause,
Let the enemy pursue me and overtake *me*;
Yes, let him trample my life to the earth,
And lay my honor in the dust.

Sing Psalm 7.1-5.

(Finlandia: [*Be Still My Soul*](#))

O Lord, my God, in You do I take refuge;
save me from those who my poor soul would tear!
Deliver me from my foes' angry deluge,
lest I be swept beyond all hope and care.
Let not injustice, let not evil stain me,
lest to the dust my glory trampled be.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 23.9-24.

Prepare.

1. How did Jeremiah feel about the false prophets?
2. Why were they false prophets? What were the effects of their teaching?

Meditate.

The prophets of Judah and Jerusalem were very active in Jeremiah's day. They were preaching all over the place. They just weren't preaching the Word of God. They were calling the people to follow the idolatrous ways of their pagan neighbors (v. 13). They turned a blind eye, and perhaps worse, seem to have encouraged the people in wicked practices contrary to the Law of God (vv. 10, 13, 14). The prophets were regarded as having the authority of God behind them. So when they began going astray, everyone followed them into the path of disobedience.

But God saw all this, and He intended to punish the false prophets (v. 15). Their unfaithful preaching and teaching had reduced the land to wickedness, profaneness, and unfruitfulness (vv. 10, 15). They falsely promised the people prosperity and peace, and encouraged them to do whatever seemed right (v. 17).

If they had actually stood in the counsel of the Lord, and heard and marked His Word, they would have seen that God was preparing to judge the land and its people and prophets (vv. 18-22). Jeremiah could see it, and he spoke courageously and compassionately (v. 9) to recall the people to the Lord. He offended the kings, priests, and prophets of Judah and was undaunted by their threats and opposition.

No one would be able to hide from the coming judgment of the Lord (vv. 23, 24). He was not some distant

deity, merely watching and shaking His head from afar. He was there, in their midst, in the words of Jeremiah the prophet; and He would not fail to carry out all He had declared against those who despised Him.

James reminds us that those who are entrusted with the ministry of the Word of God are to be more stringently judged (Jms. 3.1). Preachers and teachers and all who read the Word of God must listen, hear, mark, and obey the Word in all it teaches. We must not allow our views of what's best for us to be determined by the spirit of the age or the activities and views of our unbelieving neighbors. Jesus speaks to us from throughout the Word of God (Jn. 5.39), and He continually says, "Come, follow Me."

We deviate from Him and His Word at our own peril.

Reflect.

1. How had the false prophets gone astray? What had they looked to instead of the Lord? What might be some equivalents to this today?
2. What does it mean to "stand in the counsel of the Lord"? When do we need to do that?
3. How does this passage encourage you to pray for your pastors and teachers? For yourself?

If God were distant from us in place, you might well doubt, but he is present everywhere. To him who strives with purposeful intent, God is near. For this reason also the psalmist said, "I will fear no evil, for you are with me," and God again, "I am a God near at hand and not a God afar off." Then, just as our sins separate us from him, so do our righteous deeds draw us near to him. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew 54.8

Thank You, Lord, for being always near at hand to me, so that I...

Pray Psalm 7.6-17.

Call on the Lord to go with you throughout this day, to draw you into His Presence and guard you against straying from His righteous path.

Sing Psalm 7.6-17.

Psalm 7.6-17 (Finlandia: [Be Still My Soul](#))

Arise, O Lord, rise up in wrath to save me!
Let rage and judgment fall upon my foes!
From all around to You let thanks and praise be.
Rise up on high; the wicked curse with woes.
O Judge of all, observe my just demeanor
And vindicate me by Your grace, O Lord.

Bring to an end the evil of the wicked,
but let Your righteous ones established be.
You are my shield, my soul will not be stricken;
You save the upright; You will rescue me!
You are a righteous Judge in every way;
a God of indignation every day.

Let all repent or know Your piercing sword!
Your bow is bent and ready for the fight!
Take deadly weapons in Your hand, O Lord,
and fiery arrows, aimed against the night.
The wicked fall and stumble in their mischief,
but to my soul Your grace will bring relief.

All praise and thanks to You, O righteous Savior!
My hope, my trust, my confidence are You!
Embrace me with Your kindness and Your favor,
and to Your glory make me ever true.
We sing Your praise and glorify Your Name,
Who brings our foes to judgment and to shame.

6 An Everlasting Reproach

Pray Psalm 57.1-3.

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities have passed by.
I will cry out to God Most High,
To God who performs *all things* for me.
He shall send from heaven and save me;
He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.

Sing Psalm 57.1-3.

(Fabien: [*Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him*](#))

Lord, be gracious, gracious to me, for my soul retreats in You.
In Your shadow keep me safely till the storms of life are through.
I will cry to You, the Most High; You do all things well for me.
You will save me when I thus cry, routing all who threaten me.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 23.25-40.

Prepare.

1. What was the problem with the prophets of Judah?
2. What was the effect of their teaching?

Meditate.

Jeremiah continues his message to the false prophets of Jerusalem and Judah. The unforgiveable error of these prophets – and the reason they received “an everlasting reproach” from the Lord – is that they substituted their own visions, good ideas, and promises for the Word and Law of God, and the promises of His covenant (vv. 25-27). By so doing, they turned the affections of the people from God to false gods.

God regarded those vain teachings and prophecies as chaff compared to the wheat of His Word. His Word, like a fire breaking out in chaff, would utterly consume and destroy the false prophets (vv. 28, 29).

God was against them – a terrifying place to be (vv. 30-32). Why? Because “they steal My words every one from his neighbor”. Preachers who find their own ideas or visions more interesting than the plain teaching of Scripture lead the people they serve away from God into fantasies and false hopes. God opposes them, and all their lies, just as He opposed the false prophets of Jeremiah’s day.

The only oracle the prophets and people needed to hear from Jeremiah was the Word that God was forsaking them (vv. 33-39). They wanted to turn away from God, to attach their hearts to other deities – which were no gods at all – and so God gave them what they wanted. He would forsake them to their lying desires, and that would be “a perpetual shame” for them all (v. 40).

Only Jesus saves and sanctifies us, and we can only find Him and His grace and truth in the Scriptures. If we neglect these, preferring instead the vain imaginations of puffed-up teachers and preachers, God will give us just what we want. Which will turn out to be, in the end, not what we want at all.

Reflect.

1. How had the false prophets “perverted the words of the living God”? Is there any danger of this happening in our day? Explain.
2. According to verse 39, what was the most significant thing the people of Jerusalem and Judah were about to lose? Why is this so precious (cf. Ps. 16.11)?
3. How would you explain “an everlasting reproach” and “a perpetual shame”? Why should we want to avoid these?

*However, there is another kind of false prophet who would say anything to please listeners. They would reassure people, “No calamity will come on you,” and according to the custom of false prophets, they would support this claim in the name of the Lord. They are like those against whom Jeremiah spoke previously, those who mix their false dreams with pronouncements of the Spirit and deceive the people. Ephrem the Syrian (306-373), *Commentary on Jeremiah* 23.30*

Keep me daily in Your Word, Lord, and in the path it describes, so that I...

Pray Psalm 57.4-11.

Commit the day to the Lord, and pray that He will guard you against temptation and through any trials. Praise and thank Him throughout the day.

Sing Psalm 57.4-11.

Psalm 57.4-11 (Fabien: [*Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him*](#))

Send Your truth and lovingkindness; raging lions seek my soul.
Threats and slanderous words without rest they against me fiercely roll.
Be exalted o’er the heavens, let Your glory fill the earth!
To Your Name all praise be given, let all men proclaim Your worth!

Nets and pits they set before me; overwhelmed, my soul bows down.
Let them all in their own works be thrown and scattered on the ground.
Let my heart no more be shaken, I will sing Your praises, Lord!
Harp and glory, now awaken to extol God’s faithful Word!

Praise and thanks among the nations I will sing with all my might!
For Your truth and love are stationed far above the highest height!
Be exalted o’er the heavens, let Your glory fill the earth!
To Your Name all praise be given, let all men proclaim Your worth!

7 The King and His Shepherds

Pray Psalm 86.10-12.

For You *are* great, and do wondrous things;
You alone *are* God.
Teach me Your way, O LORD;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.
I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And I will glorify Your name forevermore.

Sing Psalm 86.10-12.

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

For You are great, You wondrous deeds do;
You are the only and sovereign Lord.
Teach me Your way, let me give heed to,
with all my heart, Savior, all Your Word!
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
praise Your Name forever, Lord!

Review Jeremiah chapters 22, 23; meditate on Jeremiah 23.3-6

Prepare.

1. What images did God use to describe His relationship to His people?
2. What does each of these images suggest?

Meditate.

Judah's problems stemmed from the fact that they had been "shepherded" by false "shepherds." The priests, prophets, and kings of Judah were supposed to watch over the Lord's people like a flock, feeding them from His Word and nurturing them in His Law. But Judah's shepherds proved false, as they turned from the Lord to worship and serve false gods, and to practice the ethics of abomination.

Here, very shortly before the final phase of Jerusalem's downfall, God offers the promise of hope for a coming day. He will bring His people back to the land. He will gather them from all the countries where they have been scattered, and He will give them faithful shepherds to help them be fruitful and increase.

And He will fulfill the promise He made to David, of a King to reign on his throne forever. A King is coming Who will accomplish all the promises of God to His people, leading them in the way of justice, righteousness, peace, prosperity, and salvation. This King has a Name: "The LORD Our Righteousness." The people of Israel and Judah had failed to fulfill the righteousness God requires. This coming King will *be* their righteousness, and He will lead them into the salvation of the Lord.

It's not hard to see Jesus here, the coming King of all the earth, and the disciples and faithful shepherds He has set over His people throughout the ages.

When all seems uncertain, unclear, and tending to hopelessness, God does not fail. We can rely on His Word. His King is on the throne, and we all are appointed as shepherds to one another, to feed and nurture and

watch out for each other according to the Word of God. Thus we may know the promises of God, and be at peace in the midst of whatever hard times we may have to endure.

Reflect.

1. Why is “shepherd” a good way of thinking about those God has set over His people?
2. Why is it important to know that God’s King – our Lord Jesus – *is* our righteousness?
3. How can Christians shepherd one another so that we can “be fruitful and increase”?

It is necessary that we understand, however, that it is the Lord Jesus Christ, a descendant of David according to the flesh, who is proclaimed by the prophets as “the righteous dawn,” “the righteous king” and “the Lord of righteousness.” Theodoret of Cyr (393-466), *On Jeremiah 5.23.5-6*

King Jesus, You are our Good Shepherd! Feed and guide me today as I...

Pray Psalm 86.1-9.

Ask the Lord to give you specific opportunities to shepherd and encourage His people today.

Sing Psalm 86.1-9.

Psalm 86.1-9 (Andrews: [*Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*](#))

Bow down Your ear, O Lord and hear me;
I am afflicted and much in need!
Rescue my godly soul, be near me;
save me, O God, all my crying heed!
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
all day long I pray and plead.

Lift up my soul, fill me with gladness;
Lord You are good, You will soon forgive.
Show me abundant lovingkindness;
let all who call on You ever live.
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
heed to my poor pleading give.

When in my trouble, Lord, I call You,
You answer me; there is none like You!
There are no works like Yours, and all whom
You have created shall worship You.
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
all shall glory give to You!

Shepherds False and True: Jeremiah 22, 23

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why did we get these “flashbacks” in chapter 22? Is there a lesson here for us?
2. What did God promise His faithful people? How does that promise apply to us?
3. Why do we need a King Who *is* our righteousness?
4. What should result when God’s shepherds are faithful rather than false?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from Jeremiah 22, 23? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.