

A CHARACTER STUDY OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

Lesson 4

THE PROPHECYING PREACHER

Part 2

“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.”

Jeremiah 23:28

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Adult Sunday school Class

THE PROPHESYING PREACHER

Thus saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David”

Jeremiah 22:21

God knew Jeremiah even before his birth. As a matter of fact, before his birth, God separated the child, Jeremiah to a holy mission. *“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”* (Vs. 1:5) “It is in the word and not in the ministers that the power [of God] resides. . . . The book of Jeremiah begins with a man who, against all his natural feelings and self-awareness, is mastered by the word, and ends with the whole world gripped by the same word. . . . Of the 359 occurrences of the phrase, ‘Thus says, the Lord,’ in the Old Testament, Jeremiah has 157, giving some indication of the strength of his emphasis on the word of the Lord.” (Motyer. P. 125) God called

Jeremiah to preach righteousness to the people of Israel. An important part of that work was preaching to the prophets and pastors of Israel. “Jeremiah was troubled throughout his career by men who pretended to be true prophets but were not (27:16-22; 28; 29:8,9). They preached an easy message of ‘peace in our time’ and were no doubt popular. Here the prophet denounces them.” (Wycliffe. P. 673) God said to him, *“Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.”* (Vs1:8)

An example of the message that Jeremiah preached to the leadership of Judah is given in Jeremiah 23. He pronounces “woe” to the pastors of the land. “These are the unrighteous king and rulers of Judah, who have been condemned in chapters 21 and 22. The once-glorious house of David has become wholly degenerate.” (Wycliffe. P. 673.) It was very common in the ancient days to refer to the political leaders as pastor or shepherds. However, throughout the rest of chapter 23, Jeremiah speaks of the spiritual responsibilities that the prophets and preachers had been

neglecting. It is reasonable to apply the lessons of chapter 23 to the spiritual leaders of Israel.

God accuses these pastors of scattering the people. God will, in His own time regather them and bless them. “God will give *“shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.”* (Vs. 23:4) In a wonderful messianic passage, (Jer. 23:3-8) Jeremiah tells us of the Messiah, the lord Jesus Christ. He calls Him, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”¹ So despite the neglect and sinful treatment of the leaders, God will re-gather His people. *“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; 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.”* (Vs. 23:7-8)

¹The words are all in upper case to signify that this is a title of the Messiah. Just as LORD is capitalized when it is YHWH (Jehovah) in the Hebrew text.

Even though God’s plan is to regather his people, Jeremiah is still sickened by the current sins of the prophets. His character as a prophet is revealed in his reaction to their sin. *“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.”* (Vs. 23:9) A broken “heart, as used here denotes a profoundly disturbed mental rather than emotional state. His mind cannot grasp the way in which these prophets have chosen to abuse their professional vocation. (Harrison)” (Guzic.) Jeremiah said that their presumptuous sin caused *“Mine heart within me . . . [to be] broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome.”* (Vs. 9) He was confused and dazed like a drunken man when he considered the shameless sin of the spiritual leadership in light of his clear understanding of the holiness of God. This impurity in light of God’s great purity and holiness was staggering. Jeremiah realized for the pastors that, God tells them, *“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.” Had the disobedient pastors and prophets told the people God’s truth the people would have turned from their evil ways and not have been disciplined by the Lord. (Vs. 22) Jeremiah had a clear understanding of the reality of God in their midst. He understood that God is God, be it close by or far away. He is everywhere present. *“Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.”* (vs. 24) This is a very clear verse teaching the doctrine of the omnipresence of God. Jeremiah is reminding the people that because you do not seem to see God does not mean that He does not see you.

Jeremiah had a clear understanding of the power of God’s Word. He challenges the prophets with the words. *“The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream.”* (Vs. 28a) The proof of a prophet’s ministry is if the prophecy comes to pass and leads the believer closer to the Lord. (Jer. 28:9) He then challenges the true preacher of God’s word with these words. *“He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What*

is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.” (vs. 28b) The challenge to the New Testament believer from this passage is clear. Since we have a clearer understanding of the Word of God, we much *“speak His word”* often and clearly to all who will listen. God’s Word is a fire. It consumes the false teaching which is chaff. To the stony hearts of sinners, it is a hammer, breaking sin and pride from their hearts. The answer to difficult ministries in Jeremiah’s day and even today is the faithful speaking (preaching) of the Word of God. It is a fire and it is a hammer. Even though Jeremiah’s ministry was not well received he faithfully delivered God’s message. The hearers were responsible for their reaction to the knowledge they were given from God’s man. Just as in the ministry of Ezekiel *“And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.”* (Eze. 2:5)

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