

JEREMIAH 23:1-40

CHAPTER 23		
<p>1. The promise of God: The Righteous Branch—the Ideal King, the Messiah—is coming</p> <p>a. God’s strong warning to the unrighteous shepherds, Eze.34:1-10</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) They were appointed to tend God’s flock, His people 2) They were guilty of scattering God’s people, driving them away from Him: By their wicked behavior 3) They would be punished <p>b. God’s promise of restoration given to the flock (His people)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) He would restore a remnant: Bring them back to the promised land 2) He would give them faithful shepherds: They would serve under the Righteous King, v.5 3) He would erase all fear & need <p>c. God’s great promise to send the Righteous Branch—the Ideal King, the Messiah—Christ, 30:9; 33:15; Is.4:2; Eze. 34:23-24; 37:24; Zec.3:8; 6:12</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) He would rule wisely & execute righteousness 2) He would save & reunite God’s people & give them peace 3) He would be called, The LORD Our Righteousness, 1 Co.1:30; 2 Co.5:21 4) He would be the Savior who would bring about a greater exodus than the exodus from Egypt, 16:14-15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would gather His people from all the countries of the world • He would lead them to the promised land (a picture of heaven), Je.30; Is.2:1-5; 4:2-6; 9:1-7; 11:1–12:6; Zec.12–14; Mt.24:30-31 <p>2. The false prophets & priests (ministers): They are rebuked by God for their sins</p>	<p>R. The Message of God to Corrupt Shepherds, the Civil & Religious Leaders of the Nation, 23:1-40</p> <p>Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this <i>is</i> his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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,</p> <p>and because of the words of his holiness.</p> <p>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 <i>is</i> not right.</p> <p>11 For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.</p> <p>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, <i>even</i> the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.</p> <p>13 And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>16 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, <i>and</i> not out of the mouth of the LORD.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 <i>it</i>?</p> <p>19 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. They broke the heart of God & of His true prophet: Because they rejected the LORD & His holy Word b. They filled the land with gross immorality <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The sin: Adultery, both sexual & spiritual 2) The judgment: The land was cursed with a draught c. They misused their power d. They were profane, unclean, corrupt, godless <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The sin: Blasphemy, defiling God’s temple 2) The judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual blindness: Their paths would become dark & slippery • A dreadful fate: They would fall, suffer disaster & punishment e. They were guilty of idolatry & hypocrisy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Their sin in Samaria: They worshipped idols & led God’s people astray 2) Their sin in Judah: They professed the LORD, the only true God, but... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They lived wicked lives, committed adultery (spiritual & sexual), & led others to sin • They were as bad as Sodom & Gomorrah 3) The judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were to suffer the bitterness & poison of God’s condemnation • The reason: They were stumbling blocks, spreading wicked behavior among the people f. They preached & taught a false message <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) They offered a <i>false hope</i>: Denied the coming judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the message in their own minds • Failed to teach God’s coming judgment 2) They offered a <i>false peace & false prosperity</i>: Were fully convinced that God would look after them no matter how they lived 3) They failed to stand in the council of God, failed to hear the full teaching of God’s Word

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God demanded righteousness & that His wrath was going to fall on the unrepentant, the wicked • That God's judgment would not cease until God's purpose was completed • That the false prophets would understand in that day (but too late) <p>g. They ministered under a false authority</p> <p>1) Their sin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were not sent by God • They failed to stand in God's council, His instructions, His Word: If they did, people would repent <p>2) God's claim: He was the only true authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was present everywhere • He saw the secrets of false prophets, what they attempted to hide • He heard their false claims: That they spoke in His Name & had dreams from Him • He knew they were lying prophets who taught the delusions of their own minds • He knew their purpose: To secure followers—focus attention on themselves & their beliefs—turning people away from the LORD & His Word <p>h. They failed to preach & teach God's Word</p> <p>1) The simple facts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False prophets' words were only straw: Did not feed people • God's Word was like fire: Purified the heart • God's Word was like a hammer: Broke a person <p>2) The judgment: God was against false prophets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Against their preaching 	<p>shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>23 <i>Am</i> I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>25 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.</p> <p>26 How long shall <i>this</i> be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, <i>they are</i> prophets of the deceit of their own heart;</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 <i>is</i> the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.</p> <p>29 <i>Is</i> not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer <i>that</i> breaketh the rock in pieces?</p> <p>30 Therefore, behold, I <i>am</i> against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.</p> <p>31 Behold, I <i>am</i> against the prophets, saith the LORD, that</p>	<p>use their tongues, and say, He saith.</p> <p>32 Behold, I <i>am</i> 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.</p> <p>33 And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What <i>is</i> the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.</p> <p>34 And <i>as for</i> 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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>37 Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken?</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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, <i>and cast you</i> out of my presence:</p> <p>40 And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.</p>	<p>the thoughts of men instead of God's Word</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Against their preaching their own ideas & claiming that they were speaking God's Word • Against their preaching false dreams & lies <p>3) The tragic facts about false prophets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They led people astray, lying to them • They were not sent by God • They did not help people <p>i. They mocked God's Word (oracle) & the true prophet's burden to proclaim God's Word</p> <p>1) The answer to be given to mocking questions: God would forsake the mocker</p> <p>2) The judgment: The false prophet & priest would be punished</p> <p>3) The right way for people to seek help from God's Word: Depend solely on God's Word—His answer, what He has spoken</p> <p>4) The wrong way to seek help from God's Word: Mixing one's own words with God's Word—distorting His truth, His Word</p> <p>5) The right way to seek help re-emphasized: Depend solely on God's Word—His answer, what He says</p> <p>6) The warning to false prophets: If they claimed to speak the Word (oracle) of God, they would face the judgment of God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God would forget them & cast them out of His presence • God would doom & shame them to everlasting
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DIVISION II

THE MESSAGES OF WARNING TO JUDAH, 2:1–25:38

R. The Message of God to Corrupt Shepherds, the Civil and Religious Leaders of the Nation, 23:1-40

(23:1-40) **Introduction:** the task of a nation’s leaders is to build up the people under their authority. Good leaders work to build a society in which people...

- will do what is right and just
- will be compassionate and benevolent, helping and serving others

But corrupt leaders have little concern with righteousness and justice. They are basically selfish and covetous, focused on seeking gain for themselves rather than the good of others. No matter how their behavior affects the people under their authority, they seek more wealth, higher position, greater power, and more honor—even to the point of oppressing, injuring, and sometimes even murdering people.

The present Scripture refers to the leaders of a nation as “shepherds” (see vv.1, 2, 4, etc.). Leaders are shepherds in the sense that their task is to look after and take care of the people (the flock) under their authority. Because there were so many corrupt leaders in Judah, the Lord instructed His prophet to preach this message. But note how Jeremiah’s message applies to every generation of leaders. This powerful message is a strong warning to and indictment of all corrupt shepherds. This is, *The Message of God to Corrupt Shepherds, the Civil and Religious Leaders of the Nation*, 23:1-40.

1. The promise of God: The Righteous Branch—the Ideal King, the Messiah—is coming (vv.1-8).
2. The false prophets and priests (ministers): They are rebuked by God for their sins (vv.9-40).

I (23:1-8) **Messiah, Prophecy Concerning, Righteous Branch; Ideal King—Jesus Christ, Names – Titles, Righteous Branch; Ideal King—Jesus Christ, Prophecy Concerning, Work of—Prophecy, Concerning Christ, the Righteous Branch; Work of—Shepherds, False, God’s Warning to—False Teachers, Sins of, Turning People Away—False Shepherds, Judgment of, God’s Punishment—Restoration, of Israel, Promised—Promises, Concerning Christ, the Righteous Branch—Promises, of God, Concerning Israel, Restoration:** God makes a most wonderful promise to His people: He will send a righteous Branch to rule over them. In contrast to the false leaders (shepherds), who were unrighteous, unjust, and negligent in their duties, the LORD promised to send His dear people the Ideal Ruler, a Ruler who would genuinely care for the people (the sheep, God’s flock). Note God’s warning to the false shepherds (leaders) of Judah, a warning that is applicable to all the false shepherds of this world:

OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE	SCRIPTURE	OUTLINE
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1. God issued a strong “woe,” or warning, to unrighteous shepherds (vv.1-2). The shepherds included all the leaders of the nation, both civil and religious. Their duty was to tend God’s flock, to take care of His people. The civil leaders were responsible to execute true righteousness and justice in society in order to develop a compassionate and benevolent spirit of service among the people. And the religious leaders were responsible to teach God’s Holy Word. This included His wonderful promises of peace, security, and prosperity if the people obeyed Him. But they were also responsible to teach the people that they would face God’s judgment if they did not keep His holy commandments and meet His demand for righteousness and justice.

Tragically, both the civil and religious leaders failed in their duties. Instead of leading the people to follow the commandments of God, to live righteous and moral lives and to execute true justice, the leaders were guilty of scattering the flock. They were actually driving God’s people away from Him. Instead of executing true righteousness and justice throughout society, they were oppressing people by being dishonest, covetous, and selfish and by lying, cheating, and stealing. In order to increase their personal wealth, positions, and power, the leaders oppressed the poor and needy. Some even went so far as to imprison and murder the innocent. They engaged in this unrighteous behavior and committed these horrible crimes just to fulfill the lust of their hearts for more and more.

As a result, God pronounced His coming judgment. Because the rulers had failed to build the righteous society He demanded—one based on justice, compassion, and benevolent service—God would punish these evil rulers and the society they had built. Although the judgment is not mentioned in this verse, it was to be the conquest of their nation by the Babylonians and the exile of the people. They were to be removed from the promised land of God.

2. On the other hand, God gave the most wonderful promise to the true believers among His people. The day was coming when He would restore a remnant of true believers to the promised land (vv.3-4). Although this remnant would be few in number, the LORD promised to make them fruitful and to increase their population. In that day, He would place responsible shepherds (leaders) over them. Under the administration of these leaders, the people would no longer be terrified by the threats of their enemies. The LORD would erase all fear and need among them. No doubt, there is a double reference here. The promise applies not only to the remnant of exiles who would return from captivity in Babylon, but also to the regathering of Israel in the last days of human history. This fact becomes clear in the next point.

3. God then gave one of His greatest promises. He promised to send the righteous Branch into the world. This is a promise that God gives time and again throughout Scripture (30:9; 33:15; Is.4:2; Eze.34:23-24; 37:24; Zec.3:8; 6:12). It is a prediction of the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Four facts about the righteous Branch draw a sharp contrast between the Ideal King and the unrighteous shepherds:

- a. The Messiah will rule wisely and execute true righteousness and justice throughout the land (v.5). When Christ returns to earth to establish God’s kingdom, there will be no lawlessness, injustice, oppression, violence, or immorality to plague the earth. Righteousness, justice, compassion, and benevolent service will characterize Christ’s rule on earth.

“Thou [Christ] lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God [the Father], thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Ps.45:7).

“And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins” (Is.11:5).

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he [Christ] that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” (Re.19:11).

- b. The Messiah will save and reunite God’s people and give them peace. They will have peace of heart, and there will be peace throughout society. When Christ returns to earth, His people will be eternally secure from all threats, enemies, temptations, and trials. Perfect peace will reign on earth.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ro.5:1).

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*” (Ep.2:13-14).

“And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col.1:20).

“But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Is.53:5).

- c. The Messiah will be called, “The LORD Our Righteousness” (Je.33:15-16; 1 Co.1:30; 2 Co.5:21). Jesus Christ is our righteousness. By living a sinless life when He was on earth, the Lord secured *perfect righteousness*, the *ideal righteousness*, for us. When people place their trust in Christ, God credits the righteousness of Christ to their account and they become acceptable to Him. God *counts* them righteous because they stand before Him in the righteousness of Christ. As this verse says, the very name of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, is The LORD Our Righteousness.

“And by him [Christ] all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Ac.13:39).

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Co.6:9-11).

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“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Co.1:30).

“For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Co.5:21).

“But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Ga.3:23-24).

- d. The Messiah will be the Savior who will bring about a greater exodus than the exodus from Egypt (vv.7-8; 16:14-15). The Ideal King will gather His people from all the countries of the world and lead them back to the promised land of God (a symbol of heaven) (Je.30:1-24; Is.2:1-5; 4:2-6; 9:1-7; 11:1-12:6; Zec.12:1-14:21; Mt.24:30-31).

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mt.24:30-31).

“In my Father’s house [kingdom] are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (Jn.14:2).

“Esaiahs also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved” (Ro.9:27).

“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Ro.11:5).

“For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven [new heavens and earth]; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Ph.3:20-21).

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven [God’s kingdom] for you” (1 Pe.1:3-4).

“And the city [New Jerusalem] had no need of the sun, [neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Re.21:23-27).

“And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Is.11:11-12).

“But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers” (Je.16:15).

“At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people....For there shall be a day, *that* the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither” (Je.31:1, 6-8).

“At that time will I bring you *again*, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD” (Zep.3:20).

2 (23:9-40) Prophets, False, Sins of, Nine Sins—Priests, False, Sins of, Nine Sins—Ministers, False, Sins of, Nine Sins—Ministers, Sins of, Nine Sins—Immorality, Spiritual, Committed by, False Prophets—Immorality, Committed by, Priests and Ministers—Judgment, of False Prophets; of False Ministers; of False Priests—Hypocrisy, of False Prophets—Teaching, False, Error of—Word of God, Mishandling of, by False Prophets—Word of God, Sins Against, by False Prophets—Mocking, of God’s Word, by False Prophets—Judgment, of False Prophets, to be Severe: God strongly denounced the sins of the false prophets and priests, those who claimed to be ministers to God’s people. Earlier, God had made a very serious indictment against these false prophets:

“Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought [nothing, a worthless thing], and the deceit of their heart” (Je.14:14).

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False prophets and teachers are dealt with time and again in the book of Jeremiah, as well as throughout the rest of God's Word. Because of their widespread influence and the damage they do to human lives and society, they must be made aware of their horrible sins and of God's terrifying punishment that will come upon them. In the present passage, nine very serious sins of the false prophets and priests (ministers) were denounced:

1. The false prophets and priests broke God's heart and distressed His true prophet (v.9) They rejected the LORD and denied or twisted the truth of His Word. This was an enormous offense against God, for such false teaching destroys human lives, devastates societies, and ruins nations. When Jeremiah meditated on the terrible evil the false prophets were bringing upon the nation, his thoughts made him stagger about like a drunken man. The damage the false prophets were causing was almost beyond his comprehension. When he contrasted their false teaching with the truth of God's Holy Word, Jeremiah's heart broke. Completely distraught, he suffered deep agony.

OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE
<p>2. The false prophets & priests (ministers): They are rebuked by God for their sins</p> <p>a. They broke the heart of God & of His true prophet: Because they rejected the LORD & His holy Word</p>	<p>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.</p>

2. The false prophets and priests filled the land with adultery (v.10). Adultery refers to both sexual and spiritual adultery. Spiritual adultery, or idolatry, means that people turn away from the LORD and give themselves to false gods. A prophet or minister can commit no greater sin than immorality, whether sexual or spiritual. Turning away from the LORD to form intimate relationships with illegitimate partners is an act of apostasy. It is the same as turning away from the LORD Himself. During the days of Jeremiah, both sexual and spiritual adultery were common among the prophets and priests. Due to their gross immorality, God's hand of judgment had already begun to fall in the form of a drought and famine. The drought and famine were a clear warning to all prophets and priests (ministers) who committed immorality, whether sexual or spiritual: they would face God's judgment.

OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE
<p>b. They filled the land with gross immorality</p> <p>1) The sin: Adultery, both sexual & spiritual</p> <p>2) The judgment: The land was cursed with a draught</p>	<p>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 <i>is</i> not right.</p>

3. The false prophets and priests misused their power (v.10c). Those who ministered among God's people were usually highly esteemed and respected. By their very position, ministers had widespread influence in the community and over the lives of people. But these false prophets (teachers) misused and corrupted their office. They coveted the office of a prophet (minister) only as a means to secure a livelihood or a position of status, influence, and power. And in many cases they used their entire so-called ministries as stepping-stones to higher positions of power in order to get more recognition, honor, and wealth. Instead of using their positions of influence to serve the people, they focused upon themselves and their personal gain.

OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE
<p>c. They misused their power</p>	<p>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 <i>is</i> not right.</p>

4. The false prophets and priests were profane, unclean, corrupt, and godless (vv.11-12). In Jeremiah's day, they were committing blasphemy by defiling the very temple of God with their wickedness. Instead of approaching God with pure hearts, they were entering the temple guilty of all kinds of sins. They were, in effect, carrying their wicked lifestyle into worship with them. This indictment probably also refers to the worship of false gods and idols that had been placed in the temple. Because the false prophets and priests were defiling true worship and God's temple, God's hand of judgment would fall heavily upon them. He would give them over to the slippery, devious path they had marked out for themselves. They would be banished to darkness and stumble about until they fell (Ps.35:6; 73:18). They would suffer disaster and punishment, a reference to the coming Babylonian captivity and exile. Of course, the judgment that was to fall upon them is also a picture of God's eternal judgment that will take place in the last days of human history.

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OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE	SCRIPTURE	OUTLINE
d. They were profane, unclean, corrupt, godless 1) The sin: Blasphemy, defiling God's temple 2) The judgment	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, <i>even</i> the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiritual blindness: Their paths would become dark & slippery • A dreadful fate: They would fall, suffer disaster & punishment

5. The false prophets and priests were guilty of idolatry and hypocrisy (vv.13-15). Note that the false prophets being referred to here were the prophets of Samaria. They were guilty of worshipping idols, in particular the false god Baal, and of leading God's people astray. Note that Jeremiah calls this a "repulsive thing." Idolatry, or any other act in which people turn away from the LORD, is a terrible evil. When a person so rebels, he denies the supremacy, authority, and power of the LORD God, the Creator of the universe.

The worship of false gods by the prophets in Samaria was bad enough, but the sin committed by the prophets in Judah was far worse. Although the prophets of Judah professed the Name of the LORD, the only living and true God, they were totally hypocritical. While they preached and walked among people professing to be followers of the true LORD, they were committing adultery and leading others into sin. In God's sight, they were as evil as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, symbols of the most disgusting immorality and perversion imaginable. Due to their idolatry, hypocrisy, and gross immorality, the false prophets would eat the bitter food of God's punishment and drink the poisoned water of His judgment. Note why: because they were stumbling blocks, spreading wicked and ungodly behavior throughout the land.

OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE	SCRIPTURE	OUTLINE
e. They were guilty of idolatry & hypocrisy 1) Their sin in Samaria: They worshipped idols & led God's people astray 2) Their sin in Judah: They professed the LORD, the only true God, but... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They lived wicked lives, committed adultery (spiritual & sexual), & led others to sin 	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. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were as bad as Sodom & Gomorrah 3) The judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were to suffer the bitterness & poison of God's condemnation • The reason: They were stumbling blocks, spreading wicked behavior among the people

6. The false prophets and priests preached deceptive messages (vv.16-20). Note that this was the charge of the LORD of hosts, the LORD Almighty Himself. The false teachers were preaching popular messages, messages that appealed to the egos and alleviated the fears of the people, but their messages were not the complete truth. Three charges were made against the preaching and teaching of the false prophets:

- a. The false prophets gave the people *false hope* (v.16). Emphasizing the love of God for people, they deemphasized the justice of God, that is, the need for people to fear Him. Furthermore, they denied the coming judgment of the LORD. But note what Scripture says: this message was not from the mouth of God but, rather, from their own minds and imaginations. Instead of teaching the truth that God's judgment would fall upon the wicked, they disputed the coming judgment. They assured the people that they were secure in God's eternal mercy and love and that He would never cast them off, certainly not eternally.
- b. The false prophets promised the people peace and prosperity (v.17). They focused their messages on God's wonderful promises of peace, prosperity, and blessings while ignoring God's demand for righteousness and His coming judgment. No matter how the people lived or disobeyed God's commandments, false prophets assured the people that they were eternally secure. They even told them that God would bless them because they were His people, the people who professed the name of the LORD.
- c. The false prophets failed to stand in the whole council of God; that is, they failed to hear the full teaching of God's Word (vv.18-20). The truth was that God demanded righteousness. His wrath was going to fall on the repentant and wicked, and when it did, it would be like a whirlwind swirling down on their heads (v.19). Furthermore, God's judgment would not cease until He fully accomplished His purpose. In that day, the false prophets and people would understand that God meant what He said when He gave them His Holy Word. God does love His people, but He demands righteousness from them. Otherwise, they must face His judgment. True righteousness and justice must be executed on earth. And the people had to heed this truth, and repent, and correct their behavior before the day of judgment came. When the day of judgment came, it would be too late.

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OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE	SCRIPTURE	OUTLINE
<p>f. They preached & taught a false message</p> <p>1) They offered a <i>false hope</i>: Denied the coming judgment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the message in their own minds • Failed to teach God's coming judgment <p>2) They offered a <i>false peace & false prosperity</i>: Were fully convinced that God would look after them no matter how they lived</p>	<p>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, <i>and</i> not out of the mouth of the LORD.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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 <i>it</i>?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>3) They failed to stand in the council of God, failed to hear the full teaching of God's Word</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God demanded righteousness & that His wrath was going to fall on the unrepentant, the wicked • That God's judgment would not cease until God's purpose was completed • That the false prophets would understand in that day (but too late)

7. The false prophets and priests ministered under a false authority (vv.21-27). Although they claimed to serve God, the LORD did not send them. They failed to stand in God's council, failed to heed the instructions in His Word (v.22). If they had actually stood in God's council, they would have proclaimed His Word and the people would have repented of their sins, changed their evil behavior, and obeyed God's commandments.

Note the LORD's claim that He is the *only true authority* (vv.23-27). He alone had the right to say who could preach His Word and minister to His people. The claim of the false prophets could not stand up under God's scrutiny. He was present everywhere (omniscient), and He saw what the false prophets attempted to hide. No matter what their sins were, the LORD saw their wicked behavior. Furthermore, He heard them claim to speak in His name and receive their messages (dreams) from Him (v.25). But the LORD knew the truth: they were lying prophets who taught the delusions of their own minds (v.26). He also knew their purpose: they were out to obtain followers, people who would be loyal to them and their beliefs. He knew that they were attaching people to themselves by turning them away from God and His Word. Tragically, the false teachers proclaimed a popular message that made it easy for people to be religious and still follow the sinful ways of the world. Thus by listening to the false teachers and prophets, the people become attached to false religions, accepted false teachings about God and denied His Holy Word. They refused to obey God's commandments and lived sinful lives.

OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE	SCRIPTURE	OUTLINE
<p>g. They ministered under a false authority</p> <p>1) Their sin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were not sent by God • They failed to stand in God's council, His instructions, His Word: If they did, people would repent <p>2) God's claim: He was the only true authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was present everywhere • He saw the secrets of false prophets, what they attempted to hide 	<p>21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>23 <i>Am</i> I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?</p> <p>24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth?</p>	<p>saith the LORD.</p> <p>25 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.</p> <p>26 How long shall <i>this</i> be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, <i>they are</i> prophets of the deceit of their own heart;</p> <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He heard their false claims: That they spoke in His Name & had dreams from Him • He knew they were lying prophets who taught the delusions of their own minds • He knew their purpose: To secure followers—focus attention on themselves & their beliefs—turning people away from the LORD & His

8. The false prophets and priests failed to preach and teach God's Word (vv.28-32). Their messages did not come from the same source as the messages preached by true prophets. The messages preached by the false prophets were nothing more than the dreams of their own minds. Comparing their messages to those of true prophets was like comparing straw to grain. Their *straw messages* did not feed people. But the Word of God is like fire that purifies and cleanses the human heart. God's Word is like a hammer that breaks the hard rock of the human heart, stirring people to confess and repent of their sins.

Note what God said: He also stood against false prophets (vv.30-31). He was against them because they preach the thoughts of men instead of God's Word. He was against them because they preached their own ideas but claimed they were speaking the Word of God. And for a third time, God emphasized that He was against those who preached the false

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dreams and lies of their own minds (v.32^a; also see vv.30, 31). Three reasons are given why God was so strongly opposed to false prophets:

- ⇒ They told reckless lies and led people astray.
- ⇒ They were not sent or appointed by God.
- ⇒ They did not benefit people, not in the least.

OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE	SCRIPTURE	OUTLINE
<p>h. They failed to preach & teach God's Word</p> <p>1) The simple facts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False prophets' words were only straw: Did not feed people • God's Word was like fire: Purified the heart • God's Word was like a hammer: Broke a person <p>2) The judgment: God was against false prophets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Against their preaching the thoughts of men instead of God's Word 	<p>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 <i>is</i> the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.</p> <p>29 <i>Is</i> not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer <i>that</i> breaketh the rock in pieces?</p> <p>30 Therefore, behold, I <i>am</i> against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.</p>	<p>31 Behold, I <i>am</i> against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.</p> <p>32 Behold, I <i>am</i> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Against their preaching their own ideas & claiming that they were speaking God's Word • Against their preaching false dreams & lies <p>3) The tragic facts about false prophets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They led people astray, lying to them • They were not sent by God • They did not help people

9. The false prophets and priests mocked God's oracle, His Word, and they mocked the burden of true prophets to proclaim God's Word (vv.33-40).

- a. The LORD told true prophets how to answer when a false prophet or anyone else asked a mocking question. A true prophet was to declare that God would forsake the mocker (v.33).
- b. The LORD told true prophets what to say when any false prophet or priest claimed to have a burden for the message (oracle) of God. A true prophet was to proclaim that the false prophet and his household would face God's judgment. The reason is self-evident: he was a false teacher, a person who was making a hypocritical claim for his own personal gain.
- c. The right way for people to seek the LORD's help is to depend on the Word of God, it and it alone (v.35). When people truly need help from the LORD, they should seek the answer in the Word of God, searching out just what God has said about the matter.
- d. The wrong way for people to seek help from God's Word is to mix their own words with what God says (v.36). When people intermingle their words with the truth of God's Word, they distort God's truth as well as His instructions.
- e. The right way to seek help from God is reemphasized (v.37). A person must depend solely on God's Word, seeking the LORD's answer to the situation or problem.
- f. God issued a strong warning to the false prophets (vv.38-40). If they claimed to speak the Word (oracle) of God, they would face His judgment. The LORD told the false prophets of Jeremiah's day that He would forget them, along with the city of Jerusalem, and cast them out of His presence (v.39). The LORD would shame and doom them to everlasting disgrace (v.40).

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OUTLINE	SCRIPTURE	SCRIPTURE	OUTLINE
<p>i. They mocked God’s Word (oracle) & the true prophet’s burden to proclaim God’s Word</p> <p>1) The answer to be given to mocking questions: God would forsake the mocker</p> <p>2) The judgment: The false prophet & priest would be punished</p> <p>3) The right way for people to seek help from God’s Word: Depend solely on God’s Word—His answer, what He has spoken</p> <p>4) The wrong way to seek help from God’s Word: Mixing one’s own words with God’s Word—distorting His truth, His Word</p>	<p>33 And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What <i>is</i> the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.</p> <p>34 And <i>as for</i> 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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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</p>	<p>of hosts our God.</p> <p>37 Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken?</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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, <i>and cast you</i> out of my presence:</p> <p>40 And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.</p>	<p>5) The right way to seek help re-emphasized: Depend solely on God’s Word—His answer, what He says</p> <p>6) The warning to false prophets: If they claimed to speak the Word (oracle) of God, they would face the judgment of God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God would forget them & cast them out of His presence • God would doom & shame them to everlasting disgrace

Thought 1. God warns all false prophets and teachers that they will be condemned and separated from Him forever. Listen to God’s warning:

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt.7:15-23).

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pe.2:1).

“But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand” (Eze.33:6).

Thought 2. God warns us against false teachers.

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” (Mt.24:11).

“For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if *it were possible*, even the elect” (Mk.13:22).

“Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do*. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and *of a good conscience*, and *of faith unfeigned*: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Ti.1:4-7).

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Ti.4:1-2).

“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1 Ti.6:3-5).

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“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Ti.4:3-4).

“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake” (Tit.1:10-11).

“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it so*: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (Je.5:31).

“For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one *is* given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely” (Je.6:13).

“Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart” (Je.14:14).

“And as troops of robbers wait for a man, *so* the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness” (Ho.6:9).

“Her prophets *are* light *and* treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law” (Zep.3:4).