

from another angle. (Matthew 1:16 says Joseph's father was Jacob, whereas Luke 3:23 says his father was Heli. Jacob was his actual father, and Heli was his father-in-law, Mary's father.) "God declared Jehoiachin 'childless,' meaning that no son of his would ever sit on the Davidic throne. The signet ring, seal of the office of Davidic king, was stripped from him, and Jehoiachin and his five sons went into captivity. His five sons, also known to us from the tablets archaeologists have found at the famous Ishtar Gate in Babylon, were made eunuchs (as prophesied by Isaiah 39:7), and thus could raise no sons for the throne. Consequently, Jehoiachin adopted the seven sons of Neri, a descendant of David from David's son Nathan. So it was that the line of David through Solomon terminated with Jehoiachin, but continued through Neri's son Shealtiel. But Shealtiel also died childless, so his brother Pediah had to perform the duty of the Levirate Marriage (De. 25:5-10) out of which Zerubbabel was born (1 Ch. 3:17-19). Hence, Zerubbabel was the legal son of Shealtiel, but the actual son of Pediah, a descendant of King David" (*The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*).

Jeremiah 23:1-8 The Righteous Branch

This chapter continues the theme of God's dealings with Israel's unrighteous kings and leaders that began in Jeremiah 21:11, but in a brilliant flash of prophetic revelation we see a coming king who is righteousness incarnate.

Verses 1-2 is a woe upon the shepherds that were supposed to feed and protect God's flock.

God's pronouncement of woe is the most fearful thing in existence. He would be the Saviour of all men, but when His salvation is rejected, only judgment remains. No one can resist Him and nothing can stay His hand.

The word "pastors" in verses 1-2 is the Hebrew "ra-ah" (raw-aw'), which is translated "shepherd" in verse 4. The kings of Israel were supposed to be humble shepherds of God's flock. They were not to pattern themselves after Gentile kings who

rule the people for their own pleasure and profit. They were to be shepherds, not lords; feeding, not oppressing; protecting, not scattering.

We see the same thing in the New Testament (1 Pe. 5:1-4). The elders are instructed to “feed the flock of God” (1 Pe. 5:2). The word “feed” is the Greek “*poimaino*” (poy-mah’-ee-no), which refers to a shepherd. It is the word used by Jesus when He commanded Peter to “feed my sheep” (Joh. 21:16). Paul instructed the elders at Ephesus to “feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Ac. 20:28). The office of ruling a New Testament church is the office of a humble and wise shepherd.

God chose the shepherd David to be the recipient of an eternal covenant and to be the father of the Messiah (2 Sa. 7:8-13), the Good Shepherd (Joh. 10:11, 14). Christ’s eternal rule is the rule of an Almighty Shepherd over a flock. But it also has the aspect of ruling with firmness and discipline. Revelation 19:15 says, “He shall rule [*poimaino*] them with a rod of iron.”

Note that in Jeremiah God says the sheep are His (“the sheep of my pasture ... my people ... my flock,” Jer. 23:1-2). We have seen that the same thing is said of the church (e.g., “my sheep” Joh. 21:16); “the flock of God,” 1 Pe. 5:2; “the church of God” Ac. 20:28). God knows His people and cares for them. Every pastor will give account for how he treats God’s flock.

God will regather Israel (Jer. 23:3-4, 7-8).

He will gather the remnant. Not all Israelites will be saved. See Eze. 20:37-38.

God calls scattered Israel “my flock” (Jer. 23:3). Though Israel has been under God’s judgment for 2,000 years, Israel still belongs to God and still possesses the eternal covenants. Paul made this perfectly clear in Romans 9-11. See the summary in Ro. 11:25-27.

God will bring them out of all countries whither they have been driven (Jer. 23:3). After the Babylonian Captivity, most of the Jews did not return to the land of Israel. They spread farther and farther among the nations under the reign of the

Persians and Greeks and Romans. After the destruction of Israel by Rome in AD 70 and AD 135, the Jews were scattered even more widely. Observe that God says He drove them into the countries. God was in control of the “diaspora.”

God will “bring them again to their folds” (Jer. 23:3). The land of Israel belongs to Israel by eternal covenant. The Roman emperor Hadrian renamed Judah Syria Palestina in an attempt to destroy Israel’s connection to the land, but the land has belonged to Israel by divine mandate dating to the time of Joshua. See Joshua 13:7-32. In Deuteronomy 30, God promised to regather Israel to “the land which thy fathers possessed” (De. 30:5).

Regathered Israel will be fruitful and increase (Jer. 23:3). The kingdom prophecies describe this in great and extensive detail.

Regathered Israel will be fed by God-given shepherds (Jer. 23:4). In contrast to the wicked, self-serving kings, prophets, and priests of old, redeemed Israel will be ruled by godly men like Joshua, Samuel, Daniel, and Nehemiah. Every ruler will be chosen and appointed by Christ, as all authority will flow from His throne.

Regathered Israel will not fear (Jer. 23:4). The modern state of Israel lives in perpetual fear. She is surrounded by enemies who have vowed her destruction, but when Israel is redeemed and converted, her enemies will be destroyed and she will never again live in fear. This blessing will not come by the power of Israel’s technology; it will come by repentance and obedience to her God and by reception of her true Messiah.

This regathering was not the regathering from the Babylonian Captivity (Jer. 23:7-8). That was a regathering from the north, but this regathering will be from all countries.

God will raise up the righteous Branch (Jer. 23:5-6).

This is the Messiah, the chief subject of Bible prophecy and the center of God’s eternal plan.

The “branch” is mentioned six times in prophecy (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zec. 3:8; and 6:12-13).

He is the Branch of David, meaning that Christ is the descendant of David that was promised by God in 2 Sa. 7:12-13. As “the branch out of the root of Jesse” (David’s father) (Isa. 11:1), Christ is Jesse’s offspring. As “the root of Jesse” (Isa. 11:10), Christ is Jesse’s Creator. Compare Revelation 22:16, which says that Christ is the root and offspring of David. This speaks of the deity and humanity of Christ. He is both God and man. This is what Jesus referred to in Matthew 22:41-46.

He is the righteous Branch (Jer. 23:5). This refers to the virgin birth, which means Christ was the branch or descendent of David, but He is not a descendent of the first Adam, who fell into unrighteousness. Jesus is the sinless Second Adam. By the virgin birth, He was pure from His conception by the Holy Spirit. He is “that holy thing” (Lu. 1:35). In him is no sin (1 Jo. 3:5).

He is a King who will reign over the whole earth (Jer. 23:5). Compare Ps. 2:6-9; Isa. 9:7; Lu. 1:32-33.

He will prosper (Jer. 23:5). Words cannot describe His eternal prosperity! He is the Creator and owner of all things. Solomon’s kingdom was the most prosperous kingdom in human history, and Christ is “greater than Solomon” (Mt. 12:42).

He will execute judgment and justice. In contrast to the unjust, oppressive kings of old, the Messiah will rule by perfect, compassionate justice. Compare Ps. 72:2; Jer. 33:15.

He will save Judah and Israel. The ancient division between Judah and Israel will be healed. This is depicted by Ezekiel’s prophecy of the two sticks becoming one (Eze. 37:15-26). There are no “lost tribes” of Israel. God has never lost them. He knows exactly who and where they are. In Revelation 7, at the beginning of the Tribulation, God seals 144,000 Israelites from the 12 tribes (Re. 7:1-8).

He is “THE LORD” (Jer. 23:6). Christ is Jehovah God. He is “the mighty God, the everlasting Father” (Isa. 9:6). He is Immanuel, God with us (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23). The Jewish

leaders put Jesus to death for claiming to be God, but the Scripture plainly said that the Messiah would be God (Joh. 10:33).

He is “OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6). The righteous Branch is our righteousness. He is the righteous Man who is acceptable to God and who was qualified to make the atonement for man’s sins. Salvation is an exchange. “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). He is our righteousness (1 Co. 1:30; Php. 3:9). The word “justified” means “declared righteous on behalf of Christ and because of His sacrifice.”

Jeremiah 23:9-40 The lying prophets

Jeremiah is overcome with emotion because of the wickedness of the prophets (Jer. 23:9-10).

The prophecy against the false prophets begins with Jeremiah’s perspective. He was deeply affected by the sin and error of these men. The issue of false teaching was not merely an intellectual exercise to Jeremiah. It was an issue of the heart. It was an issue pertaining to God and truth. This reminds us of Psalm 119:128, which says the Psalmist hated every false way. On the part of God’s people, there should be a passion and zeal, not only *for* truth, but *against* error. In contrast, evangelicals typically deal with error in a dispassionate manner. For example, they know that Rome teaches lies, but they don’t *hate* it.

Jeremiah was affected by sin and error “because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.” Jeremiah knew God from his youth. He was not a hireling like Balaam. He believed God’s words and loved them and was gripped by them. As we saw in Jeremiah 20:9, it was the words of God that burned in him and kept him from going astray from God’s call.

Jeremiah attributed the cause of the nation’s moral pollution and “natural disasters” to the prophets (Jer. 23:10).

The land was full of adulterers (Jer. 23:10). There was spiritual adultery (idolatry) and physical adultery. Earlier Jeremiah had described the men of Israel as follows: “They were *as* fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbour’s wife” (Jer 5:8). The sex drive is one of the most powerful human appetites, and when men live according to their own lusts, they naturally turn to adultery. In modern society, the adultery is inflamed by communication technology (e.g., Internet pornography, social media).

The land was full of swearing (Jer. 23:10). When there is no fear of God, men use His name in vain. They swear and curse and blaspheme. It is not to be so with God’s people. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31).

God pronounces judgment upon the prophets (Jer. 23:11-40).

In this section, God Himself speaks. The phrase “saith the Lord” appears 13 times.

The prophets and priests were profane (Jer. 23:11). This is the Hebrew word “chaneph” (khaw-nefe’), which is elsewhere translated “polluted” (Jer. 3:1), “defiled” (Jer. 3:9), “corrupt” (Da. 11:32). Instead of walking in the paths of holiness and righteousness in God’s will, they were morally polluted.

The wickedness was in the temple itself (Jer. 23:11). See 2 Ki. 23:12; Eze. 8:3-16; 23:39; Zep. 3:4.

God pronounces the year of visitation and judgment (Jer. 23:12, 15, 19). The false prophets will fall; they will be in darkness (Jer. 23:12). Compare 2 Pe. 2:17; Jude 1:13. They will drink wormwood and gall (Jer. 23:15). They will be visited with a grievous whirlwind (Jer. 23:19). These are descriptions of eternal judgment on those who hate God’s Word and refuse to repent. “He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Pr. 29:1).

The prophets of Jerusalem had become like the Baal-worshipping prophets of Samaria (Jer. 23:13-14). Compare Jer.

2:8. They claimed to worship and serve Jehovah, but in truth they worshipped and served the god of this world.

The prophets caused the people to err (Jer. 23:13, 15). Verse 15 says “from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.” The profane prophets spread profaneness throughout the land. People are responsible for their own actions before God, but leaders have a greater responsibility because of their great influence. This is why it has been said that “everything rises and falls on leadership.” When the fathers and pastors and political leaders are not wise and godly, the people go astray. Compare Isa. 9:16. The root cause of America’s moral collapse is the apostasy in the churches.

The prophets had strengthened the hands of evildoers (Jer. 23:14-18). Instead of reproving sin and calling the people to repentance, the prophets encouraged the people in their sin. Instead of warning the people that God would judge their sin and error, the prophets promised peace and blessing (Jer. 23:17). This is true in most churches today. Instead of preaching the Word of God faithfully (2 Tim. 4:2), the pastors scratch the itching ears of people who want to live after their own lusts (2 Ti. 4:3-4).

The prophets and people were likened to Sodom and Gomorrah (Jer. 23:14). This is a reference to great moral wickedness, including homosexuality. Judah is called Sodom in Isa. 1:10 and Eze. 16:46. In Revelation 11:8, Jerusalem is still called Sodom in the end times. In August 2017, 22,000 people participated in Jerusalem’s 16th annual “gay pride parade.” The theme was “LGBTQ and Religion.”

God says the judgment would be understood in the latter days (Jer. 23:20). It is only in these days that we can look back over Israel’s entire history and understand the prophecies perfectly. Daniel also was told that the prophecies would be unsealed in the end (Da. 12:4). The timing of the prophecies was not understood in former days (1 Pe. 1:10-11).

A solemn mark of a true prophet is given in Jeremiah 23:22. He will not overlook sin and error. He will turn the people from their evil ways. He will reprove and rebuke and warn.

This is absolute and sure. Any preacher who overlooks sin is not God's man.

God is at hand (Jer. 23:23). This is a wonderful encouragement to saints, such as Jeremiah, and a fearful warning to rebels.

God sees all secret things (Jer. 23:24). This is a description of the amazing omniscience and omnipresence of God. It is a warning to false teachers who think they can hide things from God. He is not a deist God who has created the world and then left it to itself. He knows all secrets. He fills heaven and earth. He is everywhere and cannot be escaped (Ps. 139:7-12). This does not mean that God *consists* of everything as in pantheism. God created all things, but He is separate from and greater than the creation. The heavens cannot contain God (1 Ki. 8:27; 2 Ch. 2:6). Solomon said that God is greater than the universe (2 Ch. 6:18). And God is not *in* everything in the sense of panentheism. If He were, man could be justified in bowing before the creation, but God forbids this and calls it a great sin (Ex. 20:3-5).

The prophets prophesied lies (Jer. 23:15-27). They claimed to have heard a message from God, but it was a lie. It was the deceit of their own heart. The New Testament says that false teachers are "deceiving and being deceived" (2 Ti. 3:13). They are deceivers, but they themselves are deceived by the devil and by their own fallen hearts (Jer. 17:9).

The prophets intended to make the people forget God's name (Jer. 23:27). They were not changing the name of God, as the Baal prophets did. They were changing the doctrine and character of God. They were making the people forget that God is a holy Judge. This is the "side" of God's character that man naturally wants to forget. Any teaching about God that is not Scriptural is actually presenting a false god or false Christ.

God likens His Word to wheat (Jer. 23:28). It is spiritual food. It is the bread of life (Mt. 4:4). On the other hand, the false teaching was chaff. It has no spiritual nourishment. It is empty and worthless, both for this present life and for eternity.

God likens His word to fire (Jer. 23:29). This is connected with the previous verse that refers to the chaff and the wheat. The wheat is truth, and the chaff is error. The Word of God blows away the chaff, leaving only the wheat. It burns away the refuse, leaving only that which is right and pure. Scripture is the judge (Ps. 96:13; Joh. 12:48). The Bible will judge what we do in this world (1 Co. 3:13 “*every man’s work*”), what we say (Mt. 12:36 “*every word*”), how we spend our time (Mt. 12:36 “*idle*”), what we believe (2 Ti. 2:15).

God likens His word to a hammer (Jer. 23:29). It can break the hard hearts of sinners by repeated blows and bring repentance. Ultimately, the Word of God will crush everything that is contrary to God’s will (Da. 2:34; Mt. 21:44). In Jeremiah’s day, the hammer of the earth was Babylon (Jer. 50:23). When Christ returns, His Word will destroy His enemies and be God’s hammer to rule the earth with a rod of iron (Re. 19:15).

The false prophets stole God’s words from the people (Jer. 23:30). They did this by replacing God’s words with their own teachings and by re-interpreting God’s Words. False teachers use Bible words but they give them a different definition. For example, when I was a young Christian, I obtained a Seventh-day Adventist publication entitled “*Saved by Grace.*” But the publication actually redefined grace so that it included works, contrary to God’s Word. See Ro. 4:4-5; 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5.

God says that He is against the false prophets (Jer. 23:30-32). He repeats this three times to emphasize its certainty. Those who ignore God’s warnings do so at their own destruction. It is a terribly serious matter to claim to speak in God’s name. Every individual who does so had better make absolutely sure that he is speaking God’s message and not his own, because he will be held accountable.

The false prophets caused the people to err by their lies, and by their lightness (Jer. 23:32). They were taking the things of God and the words of God lightly rather than seriously and solemnly. Compare Zep. 3:4; 2 Co. 1:17.

God warns that there will be no more burden of the LORD (Jer. 23:33-38). Even after all of the clear messages by Jeremiah and other prophets of God, the people were still wickedly and unbelievably asking what is the burden or message of God. The fact is that they had no intention of hearing God's truth. In prophecy, a burden is a solemn pronouncement of judgment (Isa. 13:1). "Burden" is the Hebrew word *massa*. "It refers to a heavy, weighty thing, a thing of great solemnity. It is used to describe a heavy load (Ex. 23:5; 2 Ki. 5:17) and a heavy responsibility (Nu. 11:11). It is a message of judgment. It is 'heavy' because the wrath of God is in it, and grievous for the prophet to declare" (Scofield). "When the people sought for an oracle from God, Jeremiah was to announce that there was none. It had already been given; and the word from God was that He would forsake them. God said He would punish those who claimed any other oracle. The people were misusing the term so much in claiming divine authority for their own words that God told them not to mention the word again. Its misuse had caused the people to distort the true words of the living God. Those who continued to claim divine oracles would be judged. God vowed to cast them out of His presence along with the rest of Jerusalem. These false prophets faced the threat of unending disgrace and shame for their wicked words" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

God says He will forget and forsake Israel (Jer. 23:39-40). This does not mean that God has annulled His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. It means that those that sin against God are rejected by Him and will suffer "everlasting reproach" and "perpetual shame." These most frightful words describe God's eternal judgment. In Romans 11, Paul answers the question, "Hath God cast away his people," and the answer is a resounding, "God forbid!" The answer is summarized in Romans 11:25-27.

Jeremiah 24 Good and bad figs

The vision of the two baskets of figs was given to Jeremiah after first great deportation to Babylon.