

## THE PERPETUAL SHAME OF FALSE PROPHETS

**TEXT: JEREMIAH 23:9-40**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Throughout the book of Jeremiah we see a conflict between the prophet Jeremiah and the false prophets (23:9).
2. God ordained Jeremiah to be a prophet even before he came out of his mother's womb (1:5).
3. On the other hand, the LORD did not ordain the false prophets. They put themselves in the ministry (cf. 14:14; 23:16, 21, 26).
4. Jeremiah was broken hearted over these false prophets, who were leading the people astray (23:9).

### **I. THEIR DEPRAVITY**

1. The Bible teaches a close connection between false doctrine and immorality (23:9-40).
2. Our Lord said to the church in Thyatira, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Rev. 2:20).
3. Here we see several errors compounded in this local church -- a lady preacher, who called herself a prophetess, seducing church members to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.
4. A similar rebuke is given to the church in Pergamos, which had members that held to the doctrine of Balaam, who encouraged the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication (Rev. 2:14).
5. Jude says false teachers "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4). The word "lasciviousness" means, "unbridled lust, licentiousness, and lewdness."
6. The apostle Paul says in Galatians 5:19, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness..."
7. In Ephesians 4:19, Paul says this of spiritually blind Gentiles: "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."
8. We see this problem every day. We pick up a newspaper and read about Jewish rabbis and Roman Catholic priests arrested for molesting children.
9. We read about Pentecostal television preachers caught in sex scandals: Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Ted Haggard, and Paul Crouch, the head of the heretical Trinity Broadcasting Network.

10. The false prophets in Jeremiah's day were wicked adulterers, and consequently, the land was "full of adulterers" (23:10-12).
11. Jeremiah says the false prophets were "profane," i.e. ungodly, polluted, and corrupt (23:11).
12. False prophets in the northern kingdom of Samaria foolishly "prophesied in Baal, and caused God's people Israel to err" (23:13).
13. They committed adultery, and walked in lies. They strengthen also the hands of evildoers (23:14).
14. They were so filthy that the LORD compared them to Sodom and Gomorrah (23:14). This suggests they may have even been guilty of homosexuality.
15. This brought down the fierce judgment of God (23:15).

## **II. THEIR DELUSION (23:16)**

1. They made up their own messages, rather than getting them from the LORD like Jeremiah did (23:16, 21). Cf. 23:2 -- "Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel..."
2. They gave the people false hope, and they contradicted the prophet Jeremiah by preaching a message of peace, when in reality the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity were inevitable (23:17; cf. 8:11).
3. False teachers always preach messages that tickle peoples' ears, rather than giving it to them straight. That is why the false teachers were popular and Jeremiah was persecuted.
4. Second Timothy 4:3 and 4 says, "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."
5. The false teachers predicted peace, but in reality "a grievous whirlwind" from the LORD was about to come down upon their heads (23:17-20).
6. One of the themes of the book of Jeremiah is that the people were misled by the false prophets, who were not commissioned by the LORD (23:21, 22).
7. Verses 23 and 24 affirm the omniscience and omnipresence of the LORD. The false prophets acted as if God could not see what they were doing.
8. Our concept of God determines how we live. There is no fear of God today because people do not understand who God is.
9. Like many of the false teachers today, they deceived their deluded followers by saying, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed" (23:25), but it was all lies (23:25-28).
10. In contrast to the empty lies and foolish dreams of the false prophets, God's Word is powerful like a fire (23:29). Merrill Unger says, "Just as the fire

consumes chaff, so God's word would consume the false prophets" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).

11. John the Baptist said the Lord will "gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12).
12. God's Word is "like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (23:29). It is powerful and can break up the hard hearts of stubborn sinners.
13. Three times in verses 30, 31, and 32 the LORD says He is against the false prophets. They were guilty of misapplying God's Word and causing God's people "to err by their lies, and by their lightness" (23:32).
14. *Strong's Concordance* says "lightness" means, "recklessness, extravagance, and frivolity."

### **III. THEIR DOOM**

1. Jeremiah 23:33 says, "And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD?"
2. The word "burden" usually means a "heavy load." Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee."
3. But it can also mean an "utterance" or an "oracle" from the LORD. For example, Malachi 1:1 says, "The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi."
4. Merrill Unger says, "Jeremiah's messages from God to a flagrantly sinning and impenitent nation were naturally heavy, with the note of impending doom...Scoffingly, the people asked Jeremiah, 'What is the burden?' (with a pun on the double sense of the Hebrew *massa*). What new doom is this calamity-howler coming up with next?" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
5. The false prophets used the language of the true prophets -- "the burden of the LORD" -- but they misused it. They debased it, much like the false teachers do today when they speak about being born again and full of the Spirit and anointed by God, etc.
6. The prophets and the priests and the people all made light of Jeremiah's warnings, so the LORD said in verse 39 and 40, "Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten."

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. The false prophets gave the people a false hope; they ministered under a false authority; they preached under a false inspiration; and they preached a false message.
2. Warren Wiersbe said their conduct was disgraceful, their message was dishonest, and their attitude was disrespectful (*The Bible Exposition Commentary*).
3. Peter said in II Peter 2:1, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you."
4. The false teachers today are just as dangerous, and just as deluded, and just as depraved, and just as deceitful, and just as despicable as the false prophets in Jeremiah's