

“RUIN, REDEMPTION, AND RESTORATION”

Studies in the Book of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 23:1-40

“Beware of False Prophets”

Introduction: The prophets, priests, and kings of the ancient kingdom of Judah were empowered by God to shepherd His people and perform His will. These leaders are judged in Scripture based on their obedience or lack of obedience to the Lord. Covenant faithfulness or keeping the commandments was the primary standard of accountability. Today we will continue to review the devastating effects of failed leadership.

I. Woe to Failed Shepherds (Jeremiah 23:1-8)

- A. Shepherding is a verb used to describe biblical leadership. Prophets, kings, priests, and elders are described as leaders expected to shepherd people (2 Samuel 5:2; Psalm 78:70-72; Jeremiah 17:16). Sheep are naturally vulnerable; therefore, the negligent shepherds will be held accountable by the Lord.
- B. Verses 3-4 jumps from the Babylonian captivity to the end-times restoration of the kingdom of Israel. The nation will be restored to a state of peace and safety with godly leaders.
- C. Verse 5-6 is a prophesy of the coming Messiah, the Christ, The Lord Jesus. The Messiah would come from the line of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13). This passage also contains a direct statement of the divinity of Jesus because the Messiah is given the covenant name of God (LORD =Yahweh) (1 Corinthians 1:30)
- D. Verses 7-8 God reminds them of the future divine regathering of the scattered Israelites. Studying the whole counsel of God contained in the Scriptures affirm that this miracle occurs during the end times after the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:29-31).

II. Jeremiah’s complaint against false prophets (Jeremiah 23:9-10)

- A. The destructive spiritual leadership of the false prophets gave Jeremiah a broken heart. He had to witness the terrible consequences that came upon his people due to terrible spiritual leadership. He uses the word picture of drunkenness to express his reaction to judgement declared by the Lord.
- B. Adultery refers to idolatry and sexual immorality. Pagan worship often involved ritual prostitution. Violation of God’s law brings a curse. Cursed is everyone who does not keep God’s law (Galatians 3:10; Galatians 3:13-14).

III. God’s response to false prophets (Jeremiah 23:11-40)



- A. #1. The failed spiritual leaders are profane. God will bring disaster on them.
- B. #2. The failed spiritual leaders were directly responsible for spreading impurity. They will eat wormwood (bitter substance) and drink gall (poison – sometimes translated as snake venom) Wormwood and gall is a food drink illustration of judgment for sin.
- C. #3. The failed spiritual leaders make people worthless (idolators). A violent whirlwind from the Lord will fall violently on the wicked.
- D. #4. The failed spiritual leaders were prophesying lies in the name of the Lord. God is against the prophets.
- E. #5. The failed spiritual leaders prophesy false dreams. They will not profit the people. God will forsake them. God will punish that man and his house.
- F. #6. The failed spiritual leaders perverted the words of God. No more mention of the oracle of the Lord. God will forget and forsake them and the city. God will cast them out of His presence. God will bring everlasting reproach and perpetual shame upon them that will not be forgotten.

“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” (Romans 10:9-11)

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Sunday, March 1, 2026