

Lessons Old
Testament Prophets
Could Give
to America Today

Jeremiah 23

Introduction

- Jeremiah has some strong words for Judah. The false prophets and priests misleading the people will face sure judgment.
- Yet, God's people live in the promise of a coming Righteous Branch who will rule in justice.
- Rest in God's promises to guard against the deceptive teaching of false prophets and to speak the truths of God's Word no matter the circumstances.

12 Tribes				722	Assyria takes 10 tribes		2 Tribes of Judah		609	Babylon	539	Medo-Persia	
Obadiah	Joel	Jonah	Amos	Hosea	Nahum		-		Daniel			-	
Elisha		-		Micah	-	Zephaniah	Habakkuk		-	Ezekiel	-	★ Zechariah	
-				Isalah		Jeremiah				-	Haggai	Malachi	

Obadiah

Zephaniah

Habakkuk

Jeremiah

Righteous Branch

Jeremiah 23:1-8

Righteous Branch

- Jeremiah likens the leaders to shepherds who destroy and scatter the flock of Judah (verse 1).
- Instead of promoting the life and well-being of God's people, the leaders only bring death and destruction.
- Instead of guarding and keeping God's flock, the leaders scatter them, making the sheep easy prey.

Righteous Branch

- In verses 2–4, God outlines His plan to remove the wicked shepherds and replace them with other shepherds who will care for the people.
- Those who violate God's law will not go unpunished.
- Leaders who abuse their power and prestige will not go unpunished but will experience God's righteous wrath.
- Yet, a remnant will be preserved.

Righteous Branch

- God's enduring faithfulness can be found through the "Righteous Branch," who springs out of the line of David (verse 5).
- When this king comes, all God's people will experience the security and blessing that has eluded them in exile (verse 6).
- Today we see Jesus as the fulfillment of these promises in the New Testament accounts of Jesus, the Son of David (Matthew 1; Romans 1:3; Revelation 22:16).

Righteous Branch

- Verses 7–8 conclude with a parallel between the exodus from Egypt and the post-exilic return of God’s people.
- God plans to draw His people together into a place of security and peace.
- This will be through a renewed relationship with God in this life and the next, granted through the “Righteous Branch” - Jesus Christ.

Lying Prophets

Jeremiah 23:9-22

False Prophets

- This section includes strong condemnation of the false prophets in Judah.
- Instead of thriving under the protection of the true, just Branch of David, Judah lives under the influence of false, corrupt leaders.
- After revealing the promise of a future king, Jeremiah's laments of the present state of Judah take on an even sadder tone.

False Prophets

- Jeremiah's heart hurts for the people, yet he cannot ignore or alter the divine message he is about to reveal.
- He longs to offer a message of peace but must faithfully communicate a message of divine judgment.
- Jeremiah cannot resist God's power over him, speaking under God's direction and not his own independent volition.

False Prophets

- Wicked leaders cause the land to languish in sorrow.
- It is like a dry land longing for the life-bringing rain (verse 10).
- Prophets and priests are supposed to guide the people in proper relationship with God.
- Jeremiah laments how such spiritual guides use the most holy place (the Temple) to work the most evil deeds (verse 11).

False Prophets

- Because of such sinful choices, God promises swift, unexpected judgment on the wicked (verse 12).
- The false prophets corrupt the people (verses 14–15), leading the nation into places of danger and destruction.
- Rather than correcting bad behavior, the evil leaders reinforce the wickedness already practiced by the people.

False Prophets

- God calls the people to ignore the deceptive message of the false prophets who deny the coming judgment from God (verse 16).
- These deceptive prophets directly contradict God's message sent through Jeremiah, a message revealing judgment on the sins of Judah (verses 16–17).
- The false prophets stand in a place where they will receive devastating judgment (verses 18–19).

Jesus - Branch of David

- Much more than any human prophet, Jesus reveals God to His people (John 17:25–26) and lives as a righteous Savior who lived a sinless life (1 Peter 2:22).
- In Jesus, the Branch of David, we now receive the fulfillment of these promises.
- The promise of a righteous, just King comes to fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:21).

God's Character

Jeremiah 23:23-32

God's Character

- God is neither too far removed from human life to identify with us nor is He too close to us to suffer from the same weaknesses and flaws (verses 23–24).
- God hears the lies of the false prophets; He knows the deceit bound up in their hearts (verse 25).
- Jeremiah's declaration of God close and far away stands as a judgment against those claiming to speak for God.

God's Judgment

- The false prophets deny God's coming judgment and punishment for the people's rebellion.
- Jeremiah looks to God's promises of security for strength in the midst of exile (verses 28–29).
- God's message through Jeremiah sets a stark contrast between the deceptive oracles of the false prophets and the true word of the Lord.

God's Declaration

- Verses 30–32 conclude this section with a three-fold declaration of God's stance against the false prophets and against those who corrupt God's words.
- First, God stands against those who use borrowed clichés and steal corrupt messages that seem to convey God's divine message to the people (verses 30).
- No human message, however winsome or compelling, can replace true revelation.

God's Declaration

- Second, God stands against those who falsely claim their words come from God (verse 31).
- Simply claiming divine authority does not make it true regardless of position or prestige.
- Third, God stands against those who misuse God's means to accomplish their own purposes (verse 32).
- The false prophets hijacked the legitimacy of dreams and visions for their own sinful purposes.

Jesus Christ

- God's nearness and greatness are no better expressed than in the person of Jesus Christ.
- He is fully God and fully man, the fullness of God in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).
- Jesus embodies the reliable declaration of God's revelation of judgment on sin and salvation for God's people (Romans 10:5–15).

Burden of the Lord

Jeremiah 23:33-40

Warning

- The final verses in this chapter solidify God's contempt for the wicked and warns against the consequences of altering the words of God.
- We risk altering the Gospel itself when we manipulate the Scriptures.
- Jeremiah's warning still rings true today as we face increased social or cultural pressures to change the fundamental truths of Scripture.

Warning

- In verses 33–37, Jeremiah receives instruction on answering the questions of others.
- In verses 38–40, Jeremiah receives a warning against providing any further announcements or declarations outside of exactly what God has instructed.
- Both counts provide a clear warning to God's people, a warning affirming both the sanctity of divine revelation and the seriousness of false teaching.

Warning

- The burden of the false prophets and priests is soon to be cast off by God Himself.
- Any who persist in this false teaching even after this warning bear the consequences of their actions, consequences bringing severe judgments with far-reaching consequences (verses 34–35).
- Greater still, human deception brings God's silence (verses 36–37).

Warning

- This chapter closes with one final warning, not for the wicked prophets and priests, but for Jeremiah.
- God warns Jeremiah against altering or changing the tone and message revealed to him (verses 38–29).
- If Jeremiah is tempted to bring a message beyond what God has revealed, the punishment will be swift and sure.

Warning

- We are never authorized to alter or amend God's revealed will to the world, even if that changed message seems more fitting to fit the time, season, and setting of our day.
- Along with Jeremiah, we risk individual and communal ruin in our personal life and church life if we walk that path.
- The lesson here: stay true to the Word of God.

Resources

