

Message #27**Jeremiah 23:1-40**

Jeremiah 23 is one of those chapters that should be carefully studied by any person who says they are going to lead a Bible study as a ministry for God.

Jeremiah 23 is one of those chapters that should be taught to every man who is thinking about going into ministry. This chapter should be taught in every Pastoral theology course in Bible Institutes, Bible Colleges and Seminaries.

If you claim to be one who is teaching God's word to people, this chapter clearly says God carefully monitors who is teaching, what is being taught and whether or not it is truly His word accurately set forth. The point of this chapter is clear:

RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN ANY CAPACITY WHO CLAIM THEY ARE TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD WILL BE HELD HIGHLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE INFLUENCE THEY HAD ON GOD'S PEOPLE.

When James wrote "let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (James 3:1), he was not kidding. His certainly squares with what Jeremiah says in this chapter.

In the previous chapter (chapter 22), Jeremiah wrote that God held four political leaders responsible for leading His people into His judgment: Zedekiah (22:1-9), Jehoahaz (22:10-12), Jehoiakim (22:13-19), Jehoiachin (22:20-30). They were all rotten political leaders who led people away from God and truth and led them into judgment. Now Jeremiah takes aim at the religious leaders who were doing the same thing.

TOPIC #1 – God promises a woe judgment on leaders who do not take care of the flock. **23:1-2**

Whenever God begins something with "Woe," it is a very serious matter threatening a very serious judgment. God expects leaders to watch over the flock and see to it that it is being led in the right way. What all leaders need to realize is that the flock is not their flock, it is God's flock. The sheep are sheep of His pasture, not the leaders' pasture.

Now God describes the kind of leadership action that existed when God was judging His people:

Woe Judgment Action #1 - The leaders destroyed the sheep. **23:2a**–Destroy faith

Woe Judgment Action #2 - The leaders scattered the sheep. **23:2b**–Scatter away from truth

Woe Judgment Action #3 - The leaders have not attended the sheep. **23:2c**–Do not feed them

What these political and religious leaders did was to lead the people away from God and an understanding of His true word.

TOPIC #2 – God promises what He eventually will do for His flock. **23:3-6**

No place in history where these things have happened for Israel. This guarantees they will. What is described for Israel in these verses will take place at the end of the Tribulation at the beginning of the Millennium.

Action #1 - God Himself will regather His faithful remnant and bring them back to their pasture. **23:3a**

Action #2 - God Himself will cause His faithful people to be fruitful and multiply. **23:3b**

Action #3 - God Himself will raise up faithful shepherds to tend the flock. **23:4a**

Faithful shepherds will point the flock back to God and His word. There will be no phony religious leaders when this happens.

Action #4 - God Himself will cause His flock to no longer be afraid or terrified. **23:4b**

Action #5 - God Himself will make certain not one sheep is missing. **23:4c**

Action #6 - God Himself will raise up a Davidic King to reign over His flock. **23:5-6**

Verse 5 says, “Behold, the days are coming.” That phrase occurs about 16 times in Jeremiah and has to do with the prophetic realities that will happen in the future.

This king will be a wise King and He will do justice and righteousness and He will be identified and called as “The LORD our righteousness.” Now do not overlook that our righteousness is the Lord’s righteousness, not our righteousness—I Cor. 1:30=Jesus Christ is our righteousness. This is an imputed righteousness that one receives when he believes in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22). You cannot have the righteousness of God any other way.

The promise is that there is coming a day when the righteous Davidic King will reign over all the people of God. “Behold, the days are coming.” Israel will be saved nationally (Rom. 11:26).

Action #7 - God Himself will change the future for His people so that they will no longer be talking about what God did in the past, but what He has done in the present. **23:7-8**

The talk of national Israel is what God did in the past in delivering her from Egypt. God will change that. There will come a day when God will re-gather all Israel from all parts of the world and they will live in their own land. The talk of the world will not be about what God did with historical Israel, but what He is doing with present day Israel.

TOPIC #3 – God promises what He will do to false prophets and priests and explains why He will do it. **23:9-40**

There are three main charges and allegations that God makes against false prophets and priests and leaders.

False Prophet Charge #1 - A false prophet lives a shameful and sinful life before the people. **23:9-15**

Phony false religious leaders live a lie in real life. They are not truthful and they are not honest. They are not godly and they do not pursue Biblical righteousness. Jeremiah was so overwhelmed with what he saw happening with the religious leaders that he was in an emotional stupor. His heart was broken and he was so emotionally distraught that he could not think straight; he was like a man overcome with wine. He knew the word of God and he knew what the prophets and priests were telling the people was not the truth.

(Godless Quality #1) - False religious leaders are immoral. **23:10a**

(Godless Quality #2) - False religious leaders do not bear fruit. **23:10b**

(Godless Quality #3) - False religious leaders have a lifestyle course that is evil. **23:10c**

(Godless Quality #4) - False religious leaders are polluted and not pure. **23:11a**

(Godless Quality #5) - False religious leaders do evil things in the Lord's House. **23:11b-12**

God promises that He will cause them to trip up and will drive them into depression and gloom and He will hit them with calamity.

(Godless Quality #6) - False religious leaders proclaim false doctrine. **23:13**

They present false doctrine that actually leads God's people away from the truth. The religious leaders in Samaria, capital of Israel, were prophesying by Baal and leading the people away from God.

(Godless Quality #7) - False religious leaders strengthen people in their evil, and not turn from their evil. **23:14**

In Jerusalem, the prophets and priests were telling people lies and leading them into judgment. The specific evil named is that of Sodom and Gomorrah. False religious godless leaders were apparently promoting same-sex relationships and telling people that immoral behavior was okay. Not one person turned away from his or her sin.

God says because they have done this He will destroy them.

False Prophet Charge #2 - A false prophet preaches false messages and doctrines to the people.
23:16-32

God tells His people do not listen to the words of leaders who are not proclaiming His truth. They are leading people to empty futility and not to the blessings of God.

(Quality #1) - They claim they have visions from God, which are from their own imagination.
23:16 - they are empty phony messages.

(Quality #2) - They claim that people who despise God and His word are at peace with God.
23:17a - they tell people God loves them in their sin and rebellion.

(Quality #3) - They claim that people who are stubborn in heart will never experience God's judgment or calamity. **23:17b** - they tell God's people nothing bad will ever happen to them.

God's people make a fatal mistake when they tell people that their sin is unnoticed by God and acceptable to God.

(Quality #4) - They had not listened to the counsel of God or received messages from God.
23:18-24

These religious leaders had been in ministry for years and were not interested in actually knowing God and understanding His word. So God says in **verse 19**, I will send My judgment on them like a whirlwind. God says My anger will not be turned back (**v. 20**). God says I did not send these prophets (**23:21a**). God says I did not speak to these prophets (**23:21b**). God says if they would have preached My word, it would have turned many from evil. **23:22** God says I can be near people and far away from people, but I want all to know you cannot hide and get away with your evil because I am everywhere and I see and know everything.

(Quality #5) - They claim that they have received revelatory dreams from God. **23:25**

(Quality #6) - They prophesy that which is false and deceptive. **23:26**

They make stuff up from their own hearts.

(Quality #7) - They have a goal to make people forget the true God and His word. **23:27**

God says these dreamers cannot produce one good thing (**v. 28**). God says it is My word that is a fire and it is My word that is like a hammer that can shatter rocks and hearts (**v. 29**). They were not preaching and teaching the word of God.

God says He is against these prophets (23:30). God is not on the side of false religion and denominations. If they are not accurately presenting the Truth, He is against them. They all have the same false talking points and twist God's word (23:30). They use their tongues to say that is what the Lord declares when He doesn't (23:31) and they lead people astray by their reckless, imaginative boasting of visions (23:32).

False Prophet Charge #3 - A false prophet does not preach the truth to the people. 23:33-40

Now the actual truth that God wanted presented to His own people is that I will abandon you if you do not deal with your sin (v. 33). The oracle of God was that God was about to judge His own people and was about to forget them because they were becoming so evil.

Verse 34 says if you claim to have a message from God and don't, you will receive severe punishment. According to **verses 35-36**, false teachers confuse the people so that the people don't know what to believe. In fact, they actually forget about the word of God.

But in the end false religious teachers and leaders will pay a very high price. Their lies and deceit will not be forgotten. False prophets will never tell people that.

There are some very practical points God's people need to grasp here:

- 1) Just because a person is in ministry, does not mean he is really after an accurate understanding of God's word.**
- 2) A true minister will very carefully teach the whole counsel of God.**
- 3) A phony minister is always talking about what God has revealed to him.**
- 4) No one can hide his sin or rebellion from the seeing eye of God.**
- 5) If God's people do not turn from their sin, God will send calamity and judgment.**
- 6) God will hold political and religious leaders accountable for leading people away from God and His truth.**