

## Journey through Jeremiah Part 25 Scattering Pastors & Lying Prophets

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, June 07, 2017

### <sup>†</sup> Jeremiah 23:1-20

(1) Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

Right away we see that this prophecy that was given to Jeremiah was directed toward the “Pastors.” That word pastor comes from the Hebrew word “raw-aw” which means to tend a flock, to pasture a flock, to rule over a flock. You could interchangeably use the word “Shepherd,” in its place. The word Pastor can be used for Kings, Governors, Magistrates, or any civil ruler that is over the people and has care for the people.

Here we see that the pastors have not been properly overseeing the flock, instead, they have been destroying and scattering the flock. But, this is not just any flock because while the pastors are to be the overseers of them, the flock does not belong to them, it belongs to God. That is why he called them “**the sheep of my pasture.**”

The Pastor or Shepherd of another man’s sheep has a great responsibility. He has been entrusted for the care of the sheep, so much that he would give his own life for them. It is the same with Pastors of Churches today. We have a great responsibility to take care of God’s flock. We are to stand guard against any wolf that may try to enter in and damage the flock. That is one reason I very seldom ever allow another man to preach in my place. Unless I know them or know of them and feel assured that they teach the truth, then I will not give them any opportunity to preach.

In fact, pastors will have to give account for how they shepherded the flock according to **Hebrews 13:17:** Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

(2) Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

God pronounces judgement on these scattering pastors. He says that they “have not visited them.” Right away someone will say, “see there if the pastor doesn’t come and visit you in the hospital then he will have to answer to the LORD.” That is not what this means at all. What this is talking about is that the pastors did not discipline them or call out their sins. You can get a good idea of the meaning by reading what the LORD said to Moses when the Children of Israel had sinned:

**Exodus 32:33-35:** And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. (34) Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. (35) And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

So, this is not talking about a friendly visit from your pastor to see how you are feeling, it is a visit to call you out your sin. As a pastor, if I do not preach against sin and call it out when I see it then I am the one that will have to answer for it. Because in the last part of our text in verse 2 it says this: “**behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.**” I don’t want that kind of visit from the LORD.

(3) And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

(4) And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

This is referring to when the captives are allowed to return home to Jerusalem after the 70-years of captivity. It was under the edict of King Cyrus, the Persian King who began reigning when they defeated Nebuchadnezzar and took Babylon.

The decree by Cyrus was in 536 B.C. was to allow the people to return and to rebuild the Temple. We can read that in **Ezra 1:1-3:** Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

God will allow a remnant to return to Jerusalem, however, the “pastors” that were in charge during the time of Jeremiah would not be allowed to return and would not have their power restored.

(5) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. (6) In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Then the Messianic prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, the King, the Lord Jesus. He is a “righteous Branch” of David, meaning that Jesus’ lineage can be traced back to the royal bloodline of David.

That name, or description, “**Branch**,” given to Jesus here, although not much thought of by most people as one of his names, is used throughout the Bible and it is in reference to the Messiah. Jeremiah will use it again in **Jeremiah 33:15:** In those days, and at that time, will I cause the **Branch** of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

**Isaiah 4:2-3:** In that day shall the **branch** of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. (3) And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:

**Isaiah 11:1:** And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a **Branch** shall grow out of his roots:

**Zechariah 3:8:** Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the **BRANCH**.

The word “**Branch**,” comes from a Hebrew word which means “**to sprout, bud, or spring up.**” The thought behind it is of a new sprout coming up from a dead or dying tree. The household of David had all but died away but God’s promise was that the Messiah would branch out from the household of David.

Of course, Jesse is the father of King David. The branch is Jesus. It is very important to realize that in order for Jesus to be the Messiah, he had to come from the Davidic

line. If you look at the first Chapter of Matthew you will find the Royal lineage of Jesus coming from David to Joseph which was Jesus' earthly father by adoption. This gave Jesus lawful claim to the throne of David. Not only that if you look at Luke chapter 3 you will find the bloodline of Jesus traced back through his mother Mary, who also was a descendant of David. No one else in history can lay claim to the throne of David except for Jesus. He is the seed of David through his mother Mary and he is rightful heir to the throne through his legal father, Joseph. So while the house of David may have appeared to be dead and in the ground, suddenly a new branch springs forth from it, in the form of Jesus Christ the Messiah, the Savior.

(7) Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

(8) But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Ever since Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt's bondage, all other nations have known them to be servants of the God that delivered them from their slavery from the Egyptians. But after they are delivered from the captivity of the Chaldeans, people will no longer remember them as those delivered from Egypt, but those delivered from their enemies of the North. But, this is a two-fold prophecy, not only does God deliver them from Babylon, but in the future day when Christ rules and reigns, He will be known as the deliverer of His people from sin.

(9) Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

Now, the prophecy switches from judgement upon the "pastors" to judgment upon the prophets. While the prophets could be seen as a type of pastor or shepherd, they are really separate from them. The prophet's job was to deliver the true Word of the LORD. Unfortunately, the prophets of Judah were not doing that.

These words that are being spoken are the words of Jeremiah. He is the one who's heart is broken and bones shake, not the LORD. Jeremiah being a true prophet of God and realizing the importance of delivering the truth, cannot believe that these other men who call themselves prophets have purposely lied to the people and misled them concerning the things of God. While the prophet is dismayed at the behavior of the lying prophets, he is even more overcome concerning the judgment of the LORD and as he puts it, "[the words of his holiness](#)." He is undone, much like Isaiah described when he came into the presence of the LORD: **Isaiah 6:5:** Then said I, *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

Let me tell you something friend, when we come in the presence of the LORD we too will become undone. You may have met some godly living people here on this earth but you've never came into the presence of the holiness that God possesses. It will be more than we could take. We will be like the Apostle John who fell at his feet as dead.

(10) For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. (11) For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.

Because the prophets and priests are lying to the people and the pastors are not shepherding the people, the land is filled with adulterers and evilness. This would be talking about both physical and spiritual adultery. God's people were living in a cesspool of filth, just as the people in the United States of America. We are not different than in the days of Jeremiah. The so-called prophets and priests of today are exactly like they were in the Land of Judah. We have men who stand behind pulpits and preach a lovey dovey, sugar and spice and everything that's nice, health, wealth, and prosperity Gospel and never touch on sin, hell, repentance, and godly living. What are the results? Just take a look around you. Read the newspaper, watch the evening news, the proof is out there; ungodly living by ungodly people doing ungodly things.

(12) Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

Here is the judgment upon those false prophets, priests, and pastors. "[Their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness](#)." I don't know if you have ever tried to hike a mountain trail when the ground is wet and you have to walk a path full of roots and leaves, it's almost like walking on ice, it is very slippery. Not to mention if you tried to do that in the dark it would be very difficult. That is what the LORD is going to cause these false prophets to be like, they will try to trudge through life but it will be like walking on a slippery slope in the dark and they will fall. He says he will do this "even the year of their visitation." That phrase "year of visitation, or time of visitation" is referring to the day when the LORD comes to judge men.

(13) And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.

These so-called prophets of God were actually prophets of Baal, as that is who they were prophesying for. Because of this the people were led astray and into wickedness of Baal worship.

(14) I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

A description of the wickedness of the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Not only do they walk in lies and wickedness but they encourage and enable others to do so. You've heard that phrase "misery loves company" well so does wickedness. Those that engage and indulge in evil are always trying to gain other people to their side. It gives them a feeling of legitimacy. It's the same with the gays and lesbians of today, that is why they are doing everything in their power to change laws, rules, and public opinion about their sinful lifestyles, to give them some type of legitimacy. But, God's not fooled and neither are real Christians. – God said that "[they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah](#)." This is a lifestyle of moral and spiritual depravity. They are fully given over to their wickedness.

(15) Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

We have come across those familiar symbols of poison before in our studies; wormwood and gall. When we were studying in Chapter 11 we said that when you see that word “[wormwood](#)” in the Bible it is talking about a curse or a poison. Wormwood is another name for the root of a Hemlock plant which is very poisonous. It was often used as a method of execution. [Gall](#), means a putrid bitterness, such as what is secreted by the liver to break down fat and cholesterol – bile, it is an acid. So, giving them wormwood and gall is a cursed bitter poison, it is the penalty for their sin.

(16) Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, *and not out of the mouth of the LORD*.

These prophets claim to be prophesying for the LORD God Jehovah, but they are not. The Bible says that they are speaking of *visions of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the LORD*. In other words, the wicked imaginations of their own hearts and things conjured up in their own minds is what they are preaching.

(17) They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

No clearer example of a false prophet can be given than this verse right here. They are declaring “[peace and no evil](#)” to come upon the people. It reminds me so much of the modern day false teachers of today. These phony baloney preachers on so-called “Christian television,” on stations such as “TBN” The Trinity Broadcast Network with the likes of

- Joel “Live you Best life now” Osteen
- Creflo “Private Jet” Dollar
- Kenneth “Name it and Claim it” Copeland
- Joyce “Pretend Pastor” Myers

...and I could go on and on. Each of these as well as hundreds more false teachers are bombarding the airwaves with their messages of peace and prosperity and millions of people are following them and sending them millions of dollars to bolster their false ministries.

Some people get upset when you start calling out false teachers. “oh you shouldn’t be calling out names Brother Byron, let God deal with them.” Trust me, God will deal with them but we are not to sit back and not sound the warning trumpet against them. We are told in [Ephesians 5:11: And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.](#)

Over and over in the Bible we are warned of these false prophets and the damage they inflict upon the Church: [2 Peter 2:1-3: But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.](#) (2) And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (3) And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Jesus Himself said these words: [Matthew 24:24: For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.](#)

The Apostle Paul on his way out of Ephesus warned the Church: [Acts 20:28-31:](#)  
Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (29) For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (31) Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

And if that isn’t enough for you, how about Paul’s letter to the Romans:

[Romans 16:17-18: Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.](#) (18) For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

So, we are not to just sit idly by and not warn people of these false prophets.

(18) For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard *it?* (19) Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. (20) The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

Jeremiah asks the question, “[who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD.](#)” Certainly not these false teachers because if they had they would have not been preaching peace they would have been preaching repentance. The LORD had been warning of his wrath that was going to fall upon the wicked but the false prophets refused to listen or preach it.

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† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible