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Lead Others To The Lord Jeremiah 28:1-17

- As we have seen repeatedly, Jeremiah continues to bring an unpopular message to leaders and people of Judah. Jerusalem's doom has been sealed. The political and religious leaders certainly don't want to hear that. Back in chapter 19 God has said He will bring doom on Jerusalem because the people have stiffened their necks and ignored God's word.
- In chapter 20, a priest in the temple named Passhur, was determined to silence Jeremiah's message. He beat Jeremiah and had him placed in stocks. The mistake Passhur made is that he was trying to silence God's message, not Jeremiah's. Passhur had an obligation as a priest, to lead others to the Lord. This was an obligation that he and many other leaders had not lived up to.
- What we do and say influences others and God holds us accountable for our words and actions. This is especially true of leaders, and we all are leaders in some capacity. If you are a parent or grandparent, then you are a leader that the following generations look to for guidance and direction. If we lead others astray then we are leading them away from the Lord and into more difficult circumstances.
- This was the case with Passhur. Jeremiah told him, "the Lord has not called your name" and because of his actions his friends and family would suffer. We need to understand that regardless of how we feel about God, or Jesus, or His redemptive work on our behalf, we all teach others something about God and Christ. We either teach them that God and His Son are not important to us and have no place in our lives, or we teach them as Jeremiah did that God is to be obeyed and worshiped.
- This is the current problem with Jerusalem, we have religious leaders who oppose Jeremiah's message and are advising the King in this manner. So what is Jeremiah's message? Is it just doom and gloom? No hope, we are all doomed to die by the sword? Well yes, if you oppose God and disobey Him.
- In chapter 21 God has said, Jerusalem is lost. If you stay here and try to hold onto it, you will suffer. In 21:5 God said, "I Myself will fight against you; with great wrath". Verse 7 says "He shall not spare them or have mercy or pity on them". Jerusalem would become an utter wasteland. Desolate and uninhabitable for 50 years.
- But not all hope was lost, if you listened and obeyed God's command. If the stiff-necked people returned to the Lord, they would live. Look in 21:8-10. The Lord has set before them the way of life and death. Verse 9 says the way of death is Jerusalem; the way of life is to give yourselves over to the Babylonians. And you shall live, and your life shall be as a prize to you. The word prize is a word used to refer to the booty and spoils of war.

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- If you obeyed God, your booty would be your life.
- God would bring judgment against Judah because of the wicked leadership of her kings. The Lord demanded the kings of Judah administer justice and righteousness on a daily basis. They had a responsibility to properly administer justice. The under-privileged (the fatherless, the widow) must not be exploited and the innocent must be protected. Because of the injustices, at the hands of the leaders, God promised to make the temple a ruin and the city a desolation. Chapter 22 says if the rulers righteously administered justice, God promised that the kings would continue to sit on David's throne.
- Unfortunately the people of Judah and her kings made the wrong choice. In 22:9, when people later would ask why the city was destroyed, the answer was simply "because the people abandoned the covenant of the Lord their God and worshiped and served other gods".
- There was hope for the future however. There was a promise for the future. Look in chapter 23. In verse 3 God promises "I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all of the countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking".
- The word shepherds is a designation for Judah's leaders. Her prophets, priests, and kings. In 23:1 God has said that the evil shepherds were destroying the sheep of His pasture. They had scattered the flock, and driven people away, and failed to care for them. The leaders were unconcerned about the well-being of the people. Chapter 22 made it clear that God expects and demands leaders to be righteous and just.
- The evil shepherds were not just the current leaders. If you cross-reference this with 2Chronicles, you can see the leadership of Judah over the past generations have put the nation on a slippery slope of decline leading to God's judgment.
- However, in chapter 23, Jeremiah gives a message of hope for the future. God would gather the remnant of His people by raising up a branch of David. This king would rule wisely and justly, and the people would live in security. In 23:6 Jeremiah tells who that King would be. His righteousness will be so evident that His name will be called "The Lord Is Our Righteousness". Compared to other kings, He will be the One to establish the true righteous rule, God's Holy Appointed King. He would be the opposite of rulers like Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. This of course is our Savior Jesus, The Christ.
- In chapter 26 Jeremiah delivers another sermon in the temple similar to the one in chapter 7. This was a call to repentance. This was a call for the people to return to the Lord to avoid future disaster. This would not have averted God's judgment presently on Jerusalem, because as we have seen, this judgment was brought about by the continued wickedness over generations and was now at its climax.

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- Jeremiah was calling the people to repent and obey God by going to Babylon. Then He would judge Babylon bring His people back home. God is saying we can do the easy way or the hard way. You are going to Babylon, you can either submit and go or you can continue your stiff-necked ways and go kicking and screaming. But you're going either way.
- In chapter 28, we see one of the stiffest necks in town. The priest Hananiah. Jeremiah had continued to clash with these false prophets who refused to submit to God's will. The problem here with Hananiah is that he was advising the king, Zedekiah. Look in verse 2 of chapter 28. Hananiah tells the king "this is what the Lord of Hosts, The God of Israel says". He was not receiving instructions from God on what to tell the king. Regardless if he deliberately was deceiving the king or if he truly believed he what he was saying, he was clearly a false prophet. His message contradicted that of the true prophet Jeremiah.
- So how do you discern who is a true prophet? Flip over to Deut. Chapter 18:20-22. You put their words to the test. If they do not come to pass you do not listen to him.
- Hananiah predicted that God has broken the yoke of the king of Babylon, releasing Judah from its subservient position. Secondly, within 2 years God would return all the articles plundered from the temple. And third, King Jehoiachin and the exiles taken to Babylon would be returned to Judah.
- Hananiah has made it fairly easy to judge his validity as a prophet with the 2 year time-line. Jeremiah responds to Hananiah by saying great! Wonderful and Amen! May the Lord do so, may the Lord do all that you have prophesied. But hear this, I am not telling you what you want to hear and tickling your ears. Many prophets had come before and Hananiah's message of peace was contrary to the long tradition of Hebrew prophets like Amos, Hosea, Micah, Joel, and Nahum.
- Whether Hananiah intended to deceive or was sincere, he was sincerely wrong. His prophecies did not come to pass and he suffered judgment. The measure of a true preacher is not sincerity but faithfulness to the revelation of God. Hananiah could have confused his own desires with truth, but to influence others for the Lord we must be on guard not to confuse our own desires with clear teachings of scripture.
- Paul warned us that the time will come when people will not adhere to sound doctrine but will desire for their ears to be tickled. They will not receive God's truth (2Tim4:3).
- Jesus also warns us that every careless word uttered will require an accounting in the day of judgment (Matt12:36). Because what we say has a profound influence on others, we will be held accountable.
- Our responsibility as Believers, as Christians, is to not let our words or actions lead people away from the Lord, we are to point the way to God, the way is Jesus. We are to be a light to the world. What are your actions teaching others about God and His Son?