

# OpenTheo

## Jeremiah 21 - 23



### Jeremiah - Steve Gregg

In Jeremiah 21-23, Zedekiah's rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar and subsequent punishment is discussed, with a warning from Jeremiah to avoid wrongdoing and violence. The chapter also touches on various kings during this time period, including Jehoahaz and Jeconiah, as well as the idea of a remnant flock and the importance of distinguishing true prophets from false ones. The theme of the consequences of bad leadership and the need for repentance is present throughout, with a warning of lasting shame and reproach for Judah.

### Transcript

In chapter 21, the time has jumped forward from the previous chapters. These previous chapters appear to be sometime in Josiah's reign. The first 20 chapters, although not all of them are dated, the contents of them give the impression that they are often associated with the finding of the scroll in Josiah's day and with his reforms.

However, in chapter 21, we jump forward 20 years to the reign of Zedekiah, and thus we pass over the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jeconiah, or Jehoiakim, to the last of the kings of Judah. The historical context for this is not found until chapter 32 of Jeremiah, and 34 and chapters 37 through 39. Those are chapters that sort of give the historical events and the way Jeremiah was treated during this period of time.

But this chapter is set at the siege of Jerusalem, the final siege, which was in the ninth year of Zedekiah. And we deduce that from, first of all, the fact that it was in the time of Zedekiah, verse 1 tells us that, and also in verse 2 it says that Nebuchadnezzar was making war against Jerusalem, which means that he had returned and laid siege to it after his having passed through sometime earlier, before the time of Zedekiah's reign. Actually, in 597, Nebuchadnezzar had passed through and removed Jeconiah and taken him into captivity and had set up Zedekiah as the king.

It was 11 years later that Zedekiah saw the downfall of Jerusalem and had his own eyes put out after watching his children killed in front of his eyes. But he had rebelled. Actually, Zedekiah had sworn in the name of God that he would be loyal to

Nebuchadnezzar when Nebuchadnezzar left him in charge in 597 B.C. But as soon as Zedekiah felt like he had some support from Egypt, he decided to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, which was a very stupid thing to do.

And because of his rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came back in his ninth year, which is 588 B.C., and besieged the city and eventually took it within a couple of years. And it says, Now, first of all, who are these messengers? There was a man named Pasher in the previous chapter, but he was Pasher the son of Emer, and he was 20 years earlier than this. So a different man.

He had a different father. This is Pasher, the son of Melchiah. He is not unknown to us otherwise, however, because he wasn't really any friendlier to Jeremiah than anybody else was, although he's coming requesting something from Jeremiah, namely that Jeremiah will intercede for the nation in crisis.

But if you look at chapter 38, verse 1, it says, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, and then verse 6 says, So these men, including this Pasher at a later time, threw Jeremiah into a dungeon with others who were offended by him. Now, this man Zephaniah was not much better, because at an earlier time than this, Zephaniah had threatened Jeremiah with captivity. And we see that in chapter 29 of Jeremiah, and verse 29, 29-29.

It says, And it goes on to talk about how he threatened him with imprisonment, because he, this man Zephaniah, was the man charged with the imprisonment of crazy prophets running around. And so these two men are known to us from the historical portions of the book, and they are not friendly. However, they're asking Jeremiah for a favor at this point, because he's the only one in town that the king and these men think may really have an in with Yahweh.

That is, they feel that if all else has failed, why not invoke their own God? And as far as they know, there's only one man who has any kind of relationship with that God, and that's Jeremiah. So the king sent messengers, and you can see how extreme the need must have been if they were actually asking Jeremiah for favors, these same people who put him in prison and hated him. They said, That is, that Nebuchadnezzar will go away.

Now, sounds like they're expressing some confidence that Yahweh can help them. But it says, That is, they'll break into this city and occupy it. God says to them.

God fighting is through the Babylonians. Into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life. He shall live, and his life shall be as a prize to him.

So these are the options. This business of setting before you the way of life and the way of death is an echo of Deuteronomy chapter 30. Also, Deuteronomy 30 and verse 19, Jeremiah also states the options in similar language.

I'm putting life and death before you. There's two things you can do. You can surrender and live, or resist and die.

So, he's not any longer calling for repentance here. He's essentially saying, Now, it's interesting because these people came seemingly with a humble request of him. Please intercede for us.

And Jeremiah says, I'm sorry, that's too late for that. And he doesn't mince any words at all. And indicates that the king who's sending him for a favor is going to be killed.

Although he could avoid that if he surrenders, but he's not likely to do that. Now, judgment means justice here. Do the right thing, do the just thing in your courts.

I will not be punished according to the fruit of your doings, says the Lord. I will kindle a fire in its forest, and it shall devour all things around it. Because of the evil of your doings.

Behold, I'm against you, O inhabitant of the valley and rock of the plain, says the Lord. Who say, who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter our habitations? But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, says the Lord. I will kindle a fire in its forest, and it shall devour all things around it.

So this is an unrelenting message of destruction. And no more mercy from God. If Zedekiah is in any sense feeling a little inclined to start looking to Yahweh, which he should have been doing a long time ago.

It's too late for that. In chapter 22, thus says the Lord, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word. Now, the king of Judah here is not named, but the assumption seems to be that it's Zedekiah, the same king as in chapter 21.

The only problem with this suggestion is that it does look as if he here does hold out the option of repentance and salvation again, which seems to be not what God was really offering to Zedekiah at that late stage. And so some scholars think that this section at the beginning of chapter 22 may have been a prophecy made to an earlier king of Judah. And the fact that the king is not named leaves open that possibility since we know that the chapters of Jeremiah were not arranged in chronological order.

It would be not unthinkable that something perhaps in the reign of Jehoah has after the death of Josiah might have gotten stuck in here somewhere because the arrangement of chapters is so non chronological. And therefore, it's not known whether this king is Zedekiah. However, by the time you get to chapter or chapter 22, verse 11.

It is there are prophecies against Jehoahaz and against Jehoikim and against Jehoikin. And therefore, it would have to be that it was at least as late as the rate of Jehoikim or Zedekiah that this prophecy was uttered. So if chapter 22, verses 1 through 10 is really

holding out the option of repentance and therefore should be seen as belonging to an earlier period in Jeremiah's life to an earlier king than Zedekiah.

Then it is a section by itself that's been stuck in in the wrong place. On the other hand, it could be that it is Zedekiah. It could be that he's offering this option of repentance knowing that it'll never be accepted.

Just pointing out to you that if this were something you would do, this is what God would do. But of course, you won't and you can't. Thus says the Lord, go down to the house of the king of Judah and there speak this word and say, Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates.

Thus says the Lord, execute judgment and righteousness and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. This is what he had just told Zedekiah to do in verse 12 of the previous chapter. He had sent that message to Zedekiah.

So it would seem there's some continuity here. But this time he goes down to the king's house and says it to the king himself rather than through messengers. It says, do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

For if you indeed do this thing, then shall enter the gates of this house, riding on horses and in chariots, accompanied by servants and people, the kings who sit on the throne of David. But if you will not hear these words, I swear by myself, says the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation. That is the house of David.

He's at the king's house speaking. This is this house. For thus says the Lord to the house of the king of Judah, You are Gilead to me, the head of Lebanon, yet I surely will make you a wilderness and cities which are not inhabited.

Gilead, you may remember, was a very lush, green area. That's why the tribes of Manasseh and Reuben and Gad wanted it. They had a lot of sheep.

And in the days of Moses, they asked permission from Moses if after they had helped the other tribes conquer the land west of Jordan, if they could then return and inhabit the land east of Jordan, which was Gilead, because it was so lush. So he says, you're like Gilead, you're like Lebanon with its forests, you're lush, you're well-watered, but that's going to change. You're going to become a wilderness.

That is certainly a familiar motif by now to us, from Isaiah especially. And cities which are not inhabited. I will prepare destroyers against you, everyone with his weapons.

They shall cut down your choice cedars and cast them into the fire. And many nations will pass by this city, and everyone will say to his neighbor, why has the Lord done so to

this great city? Then they will answer, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and worshipped other gods and served them. This is a prediction that Jeremiah is simply rewording from Deuteronomy.

In Deuteronomy 29, verses 24 and 25, Moses said, all nations would say, why has the Lord done this to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean? Then men would say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. So Moses indicated that this question and answer would be given when God would judge them. And so Jeremiah has taken the same question and answer.

He's worded only slightly differently, but obviously influenced by Deuteronomy. Verse 10, weep not for the dead, nor bemoan him, but weep bitterly for him who goes away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. Now, this would be a fitting thing to say during the reign of Jehoahaz, because Jehoahaz went into captivity.

He was the son of Josiah when Josiah died in battle. Jehoahaz was reigning only three months, and then he was taken into captivity in Egypt, and he stayed there. He died there in Egypt.

He never came back. So weep not for the dead would suggest, okay, it's time to stop mourning for Josiah. You know, he's run his course.

He was a good guy. He's entered into his rest. The time now is to bemoan your present king, Jehoahaz.

He's going into captivity, and he won't return here anymore. Now, of course, this could be uttered after Jehoahaz's time, after he'd already gone into captivity, but if it is prophetic, it would be during that short reign of Jehoahaz that these words were uttered, because he came to power upon the death of his father, and then he was taken into captivity by Pharaoh Necho three months later. So assuming that verse 10 is, say, predictive, and it may not be, then it would have to have been written after the death of Josiah but before the captivity of Jehoahaz.

Now, it's, of course, possible that this statement would be made after Jehoahaz had gone into captivity, so we can't be certain about that. But then the rest of chapter 22, verses 11 through 30, address messages concerning three kings, three successive kings. The first of them is Jehoahaz, also called Shalom.

Shalom was apparently his personal name. Jehoahaz was his throne name. Sometimes when a king, a man, would accede to the throne, they would give him a throne name, and Jehoahaz was his throne name.

Likewise, the other kings after him had various names. Eliakim was renamed Jehoiakim, and that was by Pharaoh Necho, as I recall. And then Metaniah was renamed Zedekiah

by Nebuchadnezzar, and then Jeconiah is renamed Jehoiakim.

So these kings all had a given name and a changed name. Sometimes the name was changed by their parents or by the ceremony of inaugurating them into office. By their ascension to the throne, they were given a throne name, just as Solomon was called Jedediah, Beloved of the Lord.

But sometimes it was their conquerors that changed the kings' names, and that was simply a show of power, just as Adam named the animals showing his authority over them, or God renamed people like Abraham or Jacob or even Peter, gave them new names. It's a sign that the one giving the name is, as it were, demonstrating that he's in authority over the person. He's the lord of that person.

And therefore, Pharaoh Necho changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. And then Nebuchadnezzar, when he conquered in 597, he changed Metaniah's name to Zedekiah. And so we have these different names.

But Shalem in chapter 22, verse 11, Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, who took the throne briefly and went into captivity three months later. Verse 11 says, For thus says the Lord concerning Shalem, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, who went from this place, he shall not return here anymore, but he shall die in the place where they have led him captive and shall see this land no more. Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by injustice, who uses his neighbor's service without wages and gives him nothing for his work, who says, I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers and cut out the windows for it, paneling it with cedar and painting it with vermilion.

This is apparently what Jehoahaz did in the short time of his reign, decided to make himself a bigger palace, embellish it with cedar paneling and use slave labor for it, not paying them for their wages. He says to him in verse 15, Shall you reign because you enclose yourself in cedar? Did not your father, meaning Josiah, eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy.

It was well with him. Was this not knowing me, says the Lord? Let your eyes and your heart, excuse me, yet your eyes and your heart are for nothing but your covetousness for shedding innocent blood and practicing oppression and violence. So the son of Josiah was nothing like his father.

And Jeremiah reminds him of his father's reign. Your father was a just man. He cared for the poor and needy.

He did the right thing before God. Doing that kind of thing is knowing God. And God is calling you to know him in this way.

You have to come over to being agreeable with God if you're going to know God. You can know about God even if you're a total pagan. In fact, Satan knows about God a great deal.

But you can't know God. You can't have a relationship with God unless you conform to God's ways. And Josiah did that.

But you aren't doing that. You're just reigning for covetousness and bloodshed. You're just the power you've inherited from your father has just gone right to your head and it's ruined you.

And it's going to ruin your future, too, because you're going into captivity. And then the next prophecy is about Jehoiakim, the next one. Now, Jehoiakim was his brother.

Jehoiakim and Jehoahaz were both sons of Josiah. And in fact, we don't know why Pharaoh Necho took Jehoahaz out of power and put Jehoiakim in. But Pharaoh Necho got mastery over Jerusalem and removed Jehoahaz, taking him into captivity, and put his brother in his place.

Why? We don't know. But there's a good possibility that Jehoahaz was the more patriotic man, the man who Pharaoh thought might be more of a troublemaker, more loyal to his own country, maybe one who'd seek independence, seek to liberate them from Pharaoh. And therefore, he put a more compliant individual in, another royal brother, but one who might have been viewed as someone more, you know, safe for an oppressor to rule over.

And this Jehoiakim was a tyrant to his own people. And it says, Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, They shall not lament for him, saying, Alas, my brother, or alas, my sister. They shall not lament for him, saying, Alas, master, or alas, his glory.

That is, when he dies, he won't be lamented. He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey, dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem. Now, we actually don't have details about the death of Jehoiakim.

His death is recorded, of course, as an event. But the details of what happened to him are not recorded here. But since these prophecies probably were arranged, well, they certainly were arranged long after the death of Jehoiakim into their final arrangement, we have to assume that they must have come true or else they would have been rejected as true prophecies after the fact.

So he must have had an ignoble death and not a royal burial at all. Go up to Lebanon and cry out and lift up your voice in Bashan. Cry from Abarim, and for all your lovers are destroyed.

I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said I will not hear. This has been your manner

from your youth. That you did not obey my voice.

The wind shall eat up all your rulers, and your lovers shall go into captivity. Surely, then, you will be ashamed and humiliated for all your wickedness. O inhabitant of Lebanon, making your nest in the cedars, how gracious will you be when bangs come upon you like the pain of a woman in labor.

Now, it's probable that verses 20 through 23 are addressed to the nation rather than to the king himself. There's a personal message to the king, Jehoiakim, in verses 18 and 19, but it sounds like this is a rebuke to the nation about all their lovers, that is, the false gods they've worshipped, and it talks about all their rulers are going to go into captivity. So I think that this is just a reflection on what's happening to the nation because their rulers are so bad, and their rulers are all suffering judgment from God.

Jehoahaz goes into captivity. Jehoiakim eventually dies and is given not a respectful burial. And then there's Jeconiah, who's here called Coniah.

Coniah is a short form of the name Jeconiah, and we actually may know his name more as Jehoiakim in the historical records of the Old Testament. He's Jehoiakim, easily mistaken for Jehoiakim. I mean, they're not spelled very entirely similarly, but they obviously seem to end only with a different letter.

But Jehoiakim is the king last denounced. Jehoiakim or Jeconiah or Coniah, as he's here called, is the next king. So we go through three kings in succession.

Shalom, or Jehoahaz, was the son of Josiah. Jehoiakim was his brother, put into power by Pharaoh Necho. At the death of Jehoiakim, his son, Jehoiakim, became king.

But he only reigned for three months also, and he was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC. And then Nebuchadnezzar set up Zedekiah. So we're going through the final rulers of Judah here, and we've got this one who also went into captivity, not to Egypt though, but into Babylon.

Verse 24, Now, a signet ring is a very valuable thing to an important person or a king because anyone who has your signet can seal documents, and if you're a king, can make laws and authorize things and make decrees. I mean, the signet is how you exercise your authority in governing. And he says, though Jeconiah was as valuable to me as my signet ring is, I'd still throw it away.

You don't want to throw your signet away. But if it was like Jeconiah, God would throw it away because even if he had that much importance to God, God would do without him. And I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life and into the hand of those whose face you fear, the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and the hand of the Chaldeans.



So I will cast you out and your mother who bore you into another country where you were not born, and there you'll die. But to the land to which they desire to return, there they shall not return. So when Jeconiah was sent off to Babylon, there were some false prophets, as we will see in later chapters, who prophesied he was going to be coming back soon, that all the exiles who had been taken into captivity and all the treasures of Judah that had been taken off by Babylon at this earlier time in 597 B.C. would be returning shortly, within two years.

There was a false prophet who said, within two years Jeconiah is going to come home. Jeremiah said, no, that's not going to happen. He's never coming home.

He's gone for good. And so there was a conflict in the predictions of the prophets, one true and one false. Jeremiah proved to be true.

Jeconiah never did come back. And then there's this oracle against Jeconiah in verse 28. Is this man, Caniah, a despised, broken idol? Is he a vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, and cast into a land which they do not know? Oh, earth, earth, earth, or possibly land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord, write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days, for none of his descendants shall prosper sitting on the throne of David and ruling anymore in Judah. Now, when Jehoiakim was taken away, his son did not sit on the throne in his place, but his uncle, Zedekiah, did. And therefore none of Jehoiakim's sons ever ruled after him.

In fact, there's this decree that no descendant or no son of Jeconiah will ever sit on the throne, ruling in Jerusalem anymore. Now, he did have sons. So when it says, write this man childless, it doesn't mean that he'd be literally childless, but he might as well have been because he didn't leave his throne.

He didn't have anyone to inherit his throne. He had a son, but there was no throne to give him to. And so for that reason, he is considered to be essentially as good as childless.

Now, it says that no one descended from him will ever sit on the throne anymore in Jerusalem. That raises a bit of a question, because actually, what about the house of David? Isn't the Messiah supposed to come from the line of David, from the kings? And Jeconiah is in the direct line. And his sons would be the royal lineage.

How can there be a Messiah who will sit on the throne of David if no son of Jeconiah will ever do so again? Now, we'll see in the next chapter that there's an ideal king, which is the Messiah mentioned, who does come and sit on the throne of David. He is a branch of David, and just looking ahead for the moment, chapter 23, verse 5 says, Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a branch of righteousness. A

king shall reign and prosper and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely. Now, this is his name by which he'll be called, Yahweh Tzidkenu, which means the Lord our righteousness. Now, that's obviously a passage about Jesus sitting on the throne of David.

And yet, how does that work? In chapter 22, it says, The sons of Jeconiah cannot sit on the throne of David, but the Messiah will, and he hasn't come yet. What line will he come through? If you look over at Matthew chapter 1, we have a genealogy there given, which is said to be the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. It starts with Abraham and starts moving forward through history up to the time of the first century.

And it turns out, as we shall see, to be the genealogy of Joseph, the husband of Mary. It says that in verse 16. Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, called the Christ.

So this is Joseph's genealogy. And notice, if you would, verse 11. In this genealogy of Joseph, it says, Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried into Babylon.

And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel begot the rest on down. So, in other words, Joseph descended from Jeconiah. Joseph was of the kingly line.

And yet, Joseph could never be king of the Jews because Joseph was descended from Jeconiah. Though he was from the kingly line, there was a curse on the family and the descendants of Jeconiah. If Jesus had been the son of Joseph, Jesus could not be the Messiah.

He could not rule from the house of David, which is what the Messiah is supposed to do, which is why there's a virgin birth. Now, Mary, on the other hand, her genealogy is not... it's disputed. Some think it's not given, but it must be given because we must know whether Jesus is the seed of David or not.

And in Luke chapter 3, though there's no mention of Mary, there is mention of the genealogy which many people believe is Mary's. I am among those. I believe there's several reasons to suggest this is Mary's genealogy, although the wording of Luke 3.23 is confusing.

Without going into the detail, I'd like to suggest that Luke 3.23 is saying that Jesus in his lifetime was regarded to be the son of Joseph, but was in fact not. But he was descended from another line, that of Methat, the son of Levi, the son of Joseph, the son of Methaliah, and so forth. This Methat, I'm going to suggest, was probably Mary's father.

And as you go through that lineage, it goes back to David also, but it doesn't go through the line of the kings. David had many sons, but only one of them became king. And therefore David had many sons who were not of the direct kingly line.

And this was one of those lines. This was through David's son Nathan. Joseph's lineage was through David's son Solomon and the other kings of Judah.

This person came through Nathan, another son of David, and therefore was not descended through the kingly line and did not pass through the lineage of Jeconiah, and therefore did not have the curse of Jeremiah 22 attached to their lineage. Thus Jesus coming through Mary is in fact the seed of David. But not everyone who's the seed of David would qualify to be the king.

You really had to go through the right lines. So we've got a problem here. If you do come through the right line, you're disqualified because Jeconiah is in your lineage.

If you don't come through the right line, you're disqualified because you're not in the right line. You're not in the lineage of the kings. So how did God get around that? He had Jesus born through a different lineage, indeed from David, but not through Jeconiah.

And then had Jesus adopted by a man who came through the royal lineage so that Jesus' legal standing in society would be an adoptive son of the royal line, but not a seed of Jeconiah. So this is how God could raise up to David a righteous branch, even though Jeconiah's offspring would not be a part of it. Joseph lived at a time where the Jews did not have a Judean king.

They had Herod and Edomite as a king. But had there been the proper Davidic dynasty in place, Joseph the carpenter probably would have been the king. Or at least, I mean we don't know, but for all we know about his lineage, he would have qualified.

And thus his son would qualify. Jesus was not his physical son, and it's a good thing too because then he disqualified because of Jeconiah in the lineage. But he was his legal son, and of course if David had been childless and adopted a son, his son would have inherited his throne.

An adoptive son of a king can hold rank as a son because he's adopted. And therefore Jesus was adopted into the family of the kings, but because it was only an adoption and he wasn't born into the line of the kings, he avoided the problem that everybody else would have if they came through the kingly line. So this is the curse on Jeconiah.

So in chapter 22, we've had three kings in a row denounced. Jehoahaz went into captivity. Jehoiakim died an ignoble death.

Jeconiah went into captivity also and was not going to come back. Now chapter 23. Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture.

These shepherds are probably the kings that we've just been talking about. The bad kings. There's a good king going to be mentioned, but these are the bad ones and they're going to be punished appropriately.

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed my people. You have scattered my flock, driven them away, and not attended to them.

Behold, I will attend to you for evil. The evil of your doings, says the Lord. Now this woe upon the shepherds and the claim that he will judge them for not doing right by the sheep resembles Ezekiel 34.

That's the chapter in Ezekiel 34 that starts, you know, woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves. So should not the shepherds feed the flocks? And he goes on to denounce the rulers of Israel as those who have not cared for the sheep. The sheep have been victimized by wild animals.

They've been injured. They've been poorly fed and the shepherds have done nothing to help them and therefore he's going to remove those shepherds and God says, I myself will shepherd my people. He's referring to, of course, through the Messiah.

Jesus said, I am the good shepherd of the sheep. So he was the fulfillment of the promise in Ezekiel 34. Ezekiel was contemporary with Jeremiah talking about the same leaders when he said, woe to the shepherds.

But like Ezekiel, Jeremiah speaks of a time when better shepherding will replace the present guys who are not doing the job right. In verse 3, God says, I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries where I have driven them and bring them back into their folds and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them and they shall fear no more nor be dismayed nor shall they be lacking, says the Lord.

Now when he says, I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I've driven them, it is no doubt this idea that Jesus is referring to when he told his disciples that he had sheep to call in that they didn't know. In John 10, 16. John 10, 16, Jesus said to his disciples or to the Jews, in any case, he says, and other sheep I have which are not of this fold.

That is, they're not Jewish. Them also I must bring and they will hear my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd. He's talking about bringing the Gentiles into his flock.

Likewise, here, I'll gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries. In Jeremiah 23, 3. And then verse 5, Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a branch of righteousness. A king shall reign and prosper and execute judgment and

righteousness in the earth.

This sounds very much like some of the passages in Isaiah about the messianic king who would rule and unlike all the kings previously, at least the recent ones, he would be righteous and execute justice in his dominions. In his days, Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell safely. It's this kind of a promise that raised the questions Paul raises in Romans 9. Well, if Jesus is this king, if Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah, why isn't Israel saved? Wasn't the prophecy that when God raises up this branch to David, this Messiah, that Judah will be saved, that Israel will be saved? How come the Jews aren't saved? How come they're lost if Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah? That's the conundrum that Paul addresses in Romans 9. And his answer is, of course, well, it is true that Jesus has saved Judah and Israel.

But not all are Israel who are of Israel. He is not a Jew who has run outwardly, Paul had said in Romans 2. And now in Romans 9 he says, not all are Israel who are of Israel. That is to say, God's promises to Judah and Israel are true, but not every Jew belongs to that Judah.

Not every Israelite belongs to that Israel. There is a remnant that this applies to and not to others, and God has, in fact, saved that remnant in Christ. Paul says, I'm one of them.

Check it out. Has God, in chapter 11 of Romans verse 1, he says, has God, you know, cast off his people? No, I'm one of them. I'm one of the remnant.

He says, remember in Elijah's day, Elijah thought he was the only one, but God said, I have a remnant still, 7,000 who have not bowed their knee to Baal. Paul's argument, of course, is that the promises are not that all Jews will be saved, but that a remnant will be saved. And that's what is meant by, in his days, Judah will be saved, the remnant of Judah.

And they become the true Judah. And Israel will dwell safely, the true Israel that will become, will be the church. Now this is his name by which he will be called, the Lord our righteousness.

Christ is our righteousness because, of course, we have not been able, and the Jews in the days that the prophets are speaking of were not able either, to really, as a group, produce that fruit of righteousness. So someone else has to be more righteous than us and be our righteousness for us. That would be the Messiah.

Verse 7, This, of course, is a repeat of what we read in chapter 16. In verses 14 and 15 there. I called it there a new Passover, a new memorial.

Instead of remembering God as the God of the Exodus, they remember God as the God of the Messiah who has gathered his people from all the nations and brought them into their own spiritual promised land. It's very clear in verse 7, it begins with, therefore, so

it's based on what was said in the previous verses, because God raised up the Messiah, because God raised up this righteous branch, therefore the Exodus will be eclipsed in the memories of God's people by a greater salvation, that of the Messiah. Verse 9, Now, by the way, this is a very long chapter, as you can see, 40 verses, and the rest of it is about the false prophets.

So he's been talking about the bad kings, and he ends up, after talking about the bad kings, talking about the good king. So a messianic passage essentially ends that section. You could have a new chapter begin here, and it would make it a more wieldy size.

But it is a long chapter, because seemingly we have another chapter beginning here, as it were. Or if chapter 23 had begun here, and what we just read about the good king was tacked on to the passages at the end of chapter 22, then we would have two chapters that are not so long. But anyway, we now have this lengthy denunciation of the false prophets.

Now, remember earlier Jeremiah was saying, God, you've got to pity these people. They've been led astray by their prophets, who've been telling there's peace. And he expressed his frustration.

How do you get the truth across when there's people lying in the name of Yahweh? And there's no good answer to that, except you just keep speaking the truth, and somehow people are going to have to discern between the good and the bad. Now, Deuteronomy, chapter 13 and chapter 18, both gave the Jews tests to know a true prophet from a false prophet. And since they had rediscovered Deuteronomy, maybe God was just figuring, okay, I told them.

I told them how to tell a true prophet from a false prophet. Let them choose. These false prophets are leading them astray.

Now, by the way, you never find the expression false prophet in Jeremiah, or for that matter, in the Old Testament. The term false prophet is found in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament, you don't find the term false prophet, just prophets. Therefore, you have to let the context tell you whether you're talking about real prophets or false prophets.

Here it just says the prophets. It doesn't mean the true prophets, but the false ones. The Old Testament leaves it up to the intelligence of the reader to know whether we're talking about real prophets or false ones.

Actually, anyone who says they're a prophet is a prophet. But they might be a false one, rather than a true one. I'm not a false prophet or a true prophet because I don't claim to be a prophet.

But if I claim to be a prophet to you, I'm either now in the category of a true one or a

false one. As soon as I make the claim, I'm either making it truthfully or falsely. And so everyone who prophesies in the name of the Lord is a prophet.

But unfortunately, the majority of them seem to be false. And in Jeremiah's day, he was one of the very, very few who was okay and was a true prophet. These ones he's talking about are the false ones.

He says, I guess that refutes the question of whether might makes right. Their might is not right. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria.

They prophesied by Baal, and they caused my people Israel to err. Also, I've seen horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem. They commit adultery and walk in lies.

They also strengthen the hands of evildoers so that no one turns back from their wickedness. In other words, they say, you're going to have peace even though you're in wickedness. So they kind of encourage the wicked doers to keep going the wrong way.

When the true prophet is a prophet, prophets should be turning people from that. It says, all of them are like Sodom to me and her inhabitants like Gomorrah. Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, behold I will feed them with wormwood and make them drink the water of Gaul.

We've seen this earlier in chapter 9 and verse 15 and I call your attention of course to the fact that waters turned to wormwood and the people dying from drinking them is one of the features of the the third trumpet in Revelation. For from the prophets of Jerusalem profaneness has gone out into all the land. Thus says the Lord of hosts, do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you.

They make you worthless. They speak of vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise me, the Lord has said you shall have peace.

And to everyone who walks according to the imagination of his own heart, no evil should come upon you, they say. For who has stood in the counsel of the Lord and has perceived and heard his word? Who has marked his word and heard it? Behold a whirlwind of the Lord has gone forth in fury, a violent whirlwind. It will fall violently on the head of the wicked.

The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and performed the thoughts of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran.

I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel and had caused my people to hear my words, then they would have turned them back from their evil ways and from the evil of their doings. So he's basically saying if these

prophets hadn't been deceiving people, the nation would have turned around.

They would have saved the nation. These prophets had the opportunity to turn people in the direction of God, but they didn't. If they had been really prophets of God, they would have saved the nation.

Am I a God near at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places so I shall not see him, says the Lord? Do I not fill heaven and earth? Now he says, am I God near at hand but not a God far off? I think he's addressing people who think they can hide from God somewhere. God lives in Jerusalem. If I go very far away, God can't hear me, see me.

And he says, no, I fill heaven and earth. You can't hide in secret places so that I can't see you. I'm in all the places, not just near but far, everywhere.

I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed a dream. How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of deceit of their own hearts, who try to make my people forget my name by the dreams which everyone tells his neighbor as their fathers forgot my name for Baal. And these dreams, of course, are... we don't have a lot of samples of the false prophets' messages, but we do have characterizations of them given by God.

And they're essentially saying, even though you walk in the wickedness of your heart, you'll not have any trouble. God's not going to judge, and so forth. And so they're encouraging people to continue in their evil ways.

They even have dreams and visions that they claim to have that support their rosy predictions. But look at verse 28 and 29. The prophet who has a dream, let him tell the dream.

And he who has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. Okay, we're gonna have a duel here. We got the false prophets with their dreams.

We've got Yahweh's prophet who has God's word and speaking it faithfully. Okay, compare these two. What is the chaff to the wheat, says the Lord? Is not my word like a fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? In other words, when you set the false dreams of these false prophets alongside the true words of God, it's like looking at chaff versus wheat.

They're so inferior. I was mentioning to a caller today who was asking about the Book of Mormon that anyone who knows very much of the Bible, when they read the Book of Mormon, they can tell instantly it's a cheap copy. It's a cheap imitation of the Word of God.

The phrasing and things are imitating the King James Bible. But even if it weren't in King



James English, still the phrasing is a mimicry of the phrasing of the way God speaks in the Bible. But I'm not very expert in mimicry.

It's clear that Joseph Smith did not really have a real command of the Bible. He had read it probably a few times, and he was making his best attempt to imitate the language. But anyone familiar with the Word of God, putting the Book of Mormon next to it would say, this is garbage.

It's like chaff compared to wheat. It's not hard to tell the difference between the real and the false. And God said, is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? His word would win all competitions against the false words and dreams of the false prophets.

Verse 30, therefore behold I'm against the prophets, says the Lord, who steal my words, everyone from his neighbor. Now some of the words of the prophets are plagiarized from others. They claim to be speaking God's words, but they're really just borrowing what their fellow prophets have said.

They're just kind of speaking in unison, saying the same things that the other guys are saying. In fact, Micaiah was once urged to do that. You remember in 1st Kings 22, when all the prophets who were prophesying to King Ahab were saying, go up and prevail at Ramoth Gilead.

You'll go and prosper. And the king of Judah said, aren't there any prophets here who prophesy in the name of Yahweh? And so Ahab says, well there is one, this guy named Micaiah, but I don't like him. He always says bad stuff.

He never says anything good. And Josaphat said, what? Nonsense. Bring him in here.

So they brought Micaiah in, and the attendant who brought Micaiah before the king as they were coming said, now all the prophets who prophesied good to King Ahab say the same thing they say. And Micaiah said, I'll just say whatever the Lord tells me to say. And he did say something bad.

He did say Ahab would die. But the interesting thing is that the pressure was on to say all the cheery things that the other prophets were saying. And so the prophets that God is denouncing here are just imitating the other prophets, plagiarizing others, just speaking in unison with the popular message that their neighbor prophets are giving.

He says, behold I'm against these prophets, says the Lord, who use their tongues and say he says. Behold I'm against those who prophesy false dreams, says the Lord, and tell them and cause my people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them nor command them.

Therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the Lord. I like the word

recklessness with reference to false prophets, because recklessness means you're not, you're just playing fast and loose. You're not being careful.

When you say thus says the Lord, you'd better be careful that what you're saying is what the Lord says. And to just, you know, bandy about the name of the Lord and attach it to whatever oracle you're making up or you think might be genuine when you're not sure is to play recklessly with the Word of God. I frankly am a strong advocate of judging prophecies.

I do believe in the gift of prophecy. The Bible teaches it, so I believe it. But it also says let the prophets speak two or three and let the others judge.

A person when he speaks in the name of the Lord should be judged. And I may have told you, I remember telling someone recently, I don't know if it was you people or someone else, but we had a guest, a charismatic guy at our school many years ago who was leading a meeting and he said, I was sitting in the audience at our own school and he was a guest speaker there, and he said, if anyone here, you know, in the course of the meeting wants to give a prophecy, feel free to prophesy. And I said from the audience, and we'll all judge it.

And he was very angry at me after that. He confronted me about that later and said, don't you know that when you say that we're going to judge the prophecies, it's going to discourage people from giving prophecies because they're afraid it'll be judged. I said, well then Paul was guilty of discouraging prophets because he said their prophecies are going to be judged.

Anyone who is not confident that his prophecy can pass the test of judgment shouldn't give it. If you think, well I think maybe I've got a word of the Lord, I'll just say it. Thus saith the Lord.

Well, wait a minute, you're being reckless. You see, that's not honoring the Word of God. That's being casual about the Word of God.

Someone who trembles at his word, remember what Isaiah used that term? God said to this man, while I look to him that is of a broken and contrite spirit and who trembles at my word. A person who trembles at the Word of God is not going to be bandying about, thus saith the Lord, lightly. You better not say, thus saith the Lord, and say something that is from your own heart instead.

That's the complaint God has about these prophets. They say, thus says the Lord, but it's just their own dreams. It's the prophets saying it from their own hearts.

I didn't send them. And they're being reckless. He calls this recklessness on their part.

Verse 33. So when these people, or the prophet, or the priest, ask you, saying, what is

the oracle of the Lord? See, they're in the habit of borrowing prophecies from each other. So, I mean, Jeremiah's got a track record.

So these false prophets come and say, you know, what's God saying to you lately? They want to add it to their repertoire. Whatever Jeremiah's getting from God, they're going to add it to their repertoire, if it's acceptable. And when they come and say, what is the oracle of the Lord? You shall say to them, what oracle? I will even forsake you, says the Lord.

Is that the oracle you want to hear? That's the oracle. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people who say, the oracle of the Lord, I will even punish that man and his house. Thus every one of you shall say to his neighbor, and everyone to his brother, what has the Lord answered? And what has the Lord spoken? And the oracle of the Lord you shall mention no more.

For every man's word will be his oracle, and you have perverted the words of the living God. The Lord of hosts, our God. Now, he's essentially saying people won't be getting any more words from God.

So they just have to make up their own words, whatever they want to do, because God's not going to be speaking to them. Jeremiah's going to go silent and say, I don't have any oracle for you, except you're going to be destroyed. That's about it.

Thus you shall say to the prophet, what has the Lord answered you? And what has the Lord spoken? But since you say the oracle of the Lord, therefore, thus says the Lord, because you say this word, the oracle of the Lord, and I have sent to you saying, do not say the oracle of the Lord. Therefore, behold, I, even I will utterly forget you and forsake you and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and I will cast you out of my presence and I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgiven or forgotten. Excuse me.

Now. He's very strong about this. Don't say this is an oracle of the Lord.

When I said don't say that, it's not an oracle from the Lord. You're not speaking from me. Don't put my name on that.

I'm not. That's not my message. And you're taking the name of the Lord in vain, adding his name for credibility to your oracle.

And it's not real. And he says, I'm going to bring an everlasting reproach upon you. This is in context with him forsaking the city of Jerusalem.

And whether this is, of course, when the Babylonians took them temporarily down or when the Romans took them permanently down might be debated. He does say it'll be an everlasting reproach that will be brought and a perpetual shame. That has been true

with reference to Jerusalem in 80, 70.

It has not been restored. It is still in rebellion against Christ. I mean, the city of Jerusalem in Israel is in rebellion against Jesus Christ.

They're not believers. They're not followers of God. In fact, the whole nation of Israel is not even godly.

They're secular. And so the nation of Jerusalem has not been or Israel has not been restored by God. It's still, as far as he's concerned, a reproach to this day.

And this may be referring to, you know, what happened in 70 A.D. In Daniel, Chapter 12 and verse two, he talks about a perpetual reproach. And in my opinion, this is talking about 70 A.D. Although, of course, we'll have to get to our studies in Daniel before I can give you the defense of that position. And most people think something different about it.

But in Daniel, Chapter 2, or 12, verse 2, it says, And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. That word contempt can be translated loathing. Of course, it means shame.

And it's said to be an everlasting contempt that those who do not come into eternal life will experience under the judgment of God. Isaiah used the same expression, that word contempt, although it's translated differently in our Bibles. In Isaiah 66, 24, Isaiah 66, 24, which is the passage about the worm that does not die and the fire that's not quenched.

The last line of Isaiah says, And they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh. The word abhorrence is the same Hebrew word that is contempt. The everlasting contempt that Daniel spoke of in Daniel 12, 2, is here an abhorrence or contempt to all flesh.

This is not talking about eternal torment. It's not talking about even the experience of these corpses that are being burned. They're not having an awareness of experiencing contempt.

Contempt is something that someone has toward you. It is the memory of them that is loathed and abhorred and held in contempt after they've been destroyed. It's the corpses, in Isaiah 66, 24, it's the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me that are held in such contempt.

And I believe, for reasons I gave you when we studied Isaiah, that chapter 66 is talking about the judgment of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Likewise, in Jeremiah, it says there be an everlasting reproach upon you, which sounds like the same concept. And so maybe we're looking here at the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem, foreshadowed by that which was more imminent, the first destruction of Jerusalem, which foreshadowed the final destruction.

Well, we're going to be done with that now, and we need to take a break.