

Kings and Prophets 16-07-07

This is the 7th day of July, 2016. We continue our study in Kings and Prophets, resuming in the book of Jeremiah at chapter 23. Jeremiah chapter 23.

We've covered up through chapter 24, but don't panic, we just need to pick up a little momentum, and so we'll begin in 23 and we're going to move forward almost 10 chapters tonight in short order. Let me get a time reference here. I've been running criminally long and I'm not going to do that tonight, so pay attention.

I'm going to be picking them up and laying them down and we will finish much more quickly than last time. Jeremiah chapter 23. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and then we'll begin.

Father, we're grateful for this opportunity to spend time looking at the wonderful treasures to be found in your Word, especially this portion that is so pertinent for us in our national circumstances, our personal lives being intertwined and meshed in the larger context of the history that surrounds us, the decline in our national fortunes, which parallels the decline in general interest in the things of your Word, the things of your Spirit, and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for Him. We thank you for His work on our behalf.

We thank you for His ongoing representation of our interests before your throne. We're so grateful to be in Him and to share the wonderful blessings and opportunities and future hope that comes to us because of what He has done for us on the cross, what He has done for us ever since. We pray that tonight as we look at this portion of your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will bless it to each heart for motivation, for encouragement, for direction, for understanding and enlightenment and preparation for service both now and in the kingdoms to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it has been two weeks and so I am sort of curious to know if my pop quiz is going to yield fruit, if your memories have retained the things that we looked at back two Thursdays ago.

We looked at really the first half of the book of Jeremiah and singled out some significant images, some things that remind us of decision points. We had as our theme a couple of concepts from Jeremiah chapter 4 and if you remember something about the phrase, the Lord lives, establishing the truth of God's existence. If God exists, then He is pertinent.

He is not the divine watchmaker that winds up the creation and then wanders off and got busy elsewhere and forgot about us. He is not only transcendent, but He is also imminent. That's like the word imminent meaning about to happen only with an A in the middle.

Imminent means God is involved. He is active. He is interested.

He is keeping track. He is paying attention. And when we say the Lord lives, we recognize that

because He is alive, because He is real, because He is our creator, He is the author of our salvation, the one who sent the Lord Jesus Christ to redeem us, He is the source of three things.

Also listed in chapter 4, do you remember what they are? The Lord lives. He is the source of our truth. He is the source of our faith.

He is the source of our judgment and the source of righteousness. Truth, justice or judgment and righteousness. Truth, justice and righteousness.

You may remember, keep your finger in Jeremiah 23 and turn over to the Gospel of John chapter 14. John chapter 14. You will remember this as being the Lord's upper room discourse, the night that He was betrayed, the night that He was arrested, the night before His crucifixion.

And most of you can probably almost quote the first six verses. Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me.

In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you, mansions being dwelling places, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am, there ye may be also.

I go to prepare a place for you. I'm going to go there and then I'm going to come and receive you to Myself and go back to where I am and this place that I have prepared so that you can be there also. Where I go you know and the way you know.

Thomas, second only to Peter in asking good questions for bad reasons, Lord we do not know where you are going and how can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. I am the way, the truth and the life.

God says in Jeremiah chapter 4, He is truth, He is justice and He is righteousness. So we have a connection point here in terms of the truth. If you look a little bit further in that chapter, verse 19, a little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me.

Verse 19, because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father and you are in Me and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

This is our goal, Christ formed in you the hope of glory. Verse 23, if anyone loves Me he will keep My word and My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. This is not a result of salvation, this is a result of faith and obedience, having His word and keeping it.

How do we get the word? We are doing it right now, we study it together under the influence and ministry of God's Holy Spirit who makes it perspicacious as they say, makes it

understandable, makes it real. The carnal mind cannot understand the things of the Spirit because they are spiritually discerned. If we are not amenable and susceptible to the ministry of God's Spirit, this stuff doesn't make sense.

That's why the world mocks the word of God, mocks the truth of God, mocks the truth that is contained in the word. I saw a poster today, Elizabeth sent me a little, a worldly joke where you've heard about the spacecraft that went to Jupiter and is gathering all kinds of new data, Juno, and so they say, you know, here's science, Juno has reached Jupiter and has given us all kinds of information and here's creation science, they've just opened a museum of the ark where they've got a full size replica of the ark and it's got a restaurant and a gift shop and stuffed animals in it. You know, so here's our science and here's you Christian's science, you know, mocking.

And my reply to Elizabeth was, well, guess which one's making money and which one's costing money? Yeah, you guys burn all that money sending something into far off outer space and look, I'm as big a fan of science as anybody and it's fascinating to me what this thing will report. But that's one of many species of fallacy and this is false dichotomy, among other things. I am sure that there are a lot of believers working at JPL and on the staff at NASA involved in gathering this data.

This is not something Christians oppose. I haven't seen any Christians marching in the streets saying, boo on Juno, boo on Jupiter, boo on finding out more about the, you know, this is a false dichotomy, but it's a joke. It is mocking and making light of the fact that we also believe that there is deliverance represented in the ark.

Now, me, would I build an ark and put a restaurant, a gift shop and stuffed animals in it? No. But it's a way to make us or attempt to make us ashamed of our faith. Well, there's real science and then there's these people who think there was a big boat and animals that survived the flood.

Well, he who sits in the heavens shall laugh and it will be the last laugh. Remember that from the Psalms? The fool has said in his heart there is no God and the fool mocks and derides. There is going to come a sad day when there will be a reckoning for this sort of flippant disregard.

That's what Jeremiah is going to talk about tonight in our study. We're still in John and I want to flip over to chapter 16 verse 5. I go away to him who sent me. None of you asks me, where are you going? But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. Truth is our theme. This is chapter 16 verse 7. John 16, 7. I tell you the truth.

It is to your advantage that I go away. We've talked about this in the past. People say, wouldn't it have been wonderful? I walked today where Jesus walked.

It would have been great if I could have heard him teach. Of course, I would need to know Aramaic and possibly some Greek. But wouldn't it be great if I could have actually been there with the disciples and seen Jesus heal the sick and so on? Jesus says, it's better for you if I go away.

Why? If I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send him to you. And when he has come, he will convict the world of what? Sin and righteousness and judgment.

What were our three things in Jeremiah 4? Truth, justice and righteousness. Sin, righteousness and judgment. Of sin, because they do not believe in me.

Do not place faith in me. One of the things that we'll be coming to in our Sunday series on great, difficult, fun, deep questions of the Bible is the nature of the condemnation that sends people to the lake of fire. There is a widespread misconception that people go to hell for their sins, and they don't.

It is a single sin. It is this sin. It is the sin of disbelief in Jesus Christ.

They reject at whatever level the revelation came. In some cases, it's no more than God's consciousness because there is a strong rejection at the point that God makes himself known. This isn't an emotional impression.

This doesn't have to be anything more than a realization that there is more going on that meets the eye. And you either want to know how this earth came into being, who is the creator, why did he create it, what is he up to, what is his purpose, what is his plan, what is his nature, who is he? You're either curious about that or you're not. You either go toward the light or you go away from the light.

Some people love darkness rather than light because like Lucifer, they would rather be independent. Well, the problem with being independent of the creator is that you can't last. There is no eternal life disconnected from the creator.

It is to your advantage that I go away. If I depart, I will send the Comforter, the Helper, to you. And when he has come, he will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, of sin because they do not believe in me.

This is the unforgivable sin, the only one. And Jesus identifies this elsewhere as blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because it is the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of the truth of God and his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you reject that witness, you are basically calling God a liar. You are distancing yourself. You are separating yourself from the only path to life.

And God says, come unto me. The Lord Jesus said, come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. There are people who don't want to admit that they're

weary, don't want to admit that they're heavy laden.

They're perfectly happy to try to carry their own load and remedy their own failures and shortcomings in their own strength. And God comes alongside and says, let me take that burden. Drop your pack at the foot of the cross.

People don't want to do that. There's a pride element. There is a self-sufficiency element.

There is, I will be like the most high. I can do everything for myself. I will be my own arbiter of righteousness.

I will be my own arbiter of truth. I will decide what is and isn't sin. I will decide what is just and what is unjust.

I will elbow the God of the universe aside and I will offer arbitrate and determine these things for myself. Well, that is a sin for which there can be no remedy. You have by rejecting the only remedy, you have left yourself no option righteousness and of judgment of righteousness because I go to my father and you see me no more.

Jesus spoke of righteousness. He taught righteousness. He embodied righteousness.

His life is a living testament to perfect righteousness. When he leaves and goes to the father, now the Holy Spirit reflects and testifies to righteousness. How and where does He do that? In you and in me.

We are now the body of Christ and in the filling of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit reflects that righteousness. And to the extent that we live a Spirit filled life, we are that testimony. And of judgment, verse 11, because the ruler of this world is judged.

You think that seems a bit of a disconnect. What does that got to do with anything? The judgment is on the attitude that the ruler of this world pioneered. Go to Isaiah chapter 14.

Go to Ezekiel chapter 28 and read about the five I wills, about the multitude of merchandise. I've got my own plan. I will do my own business.

Jesus said, I must be about my father's business. Lucifer said, I must be about my own business. And in that merchandise, in that activity, self-serving, self-seeking, self-promoting, self-elevating, self-centered.

It's the original subjectivity. There is the attitude that must be judged. It is the cancer that must be excised.

So you can put beside Jeremiah chapter 4, John chapter 16, this section centering on verses 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16. 7-11. 7-11.

John 16, 7-11. Next to Jeremiah chapter 4. So that was our starting point last time. The Lord

lives.

He's real. He is the issue. He has defined and established the purposes and the standards in this life.

And we ignore that at our peril, whether believers or unbelievers. Now, here's the heart of the review. What were the five images that we gleaned from chapters 17 through 24? You think of the human heart.

That was number one. It's two kinds of heart. What are they? It's either a malleable and impressionable heart, a heart that is humble, a heart that is teachable, a heart that is willing to learn, willing to ask questions, willing to come to God asking and seeking and knocking.

You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. If you're standing there with your knuckles on your hips saying, where's God? You're going to be standing there a long time because you will seek me and find me when you search for me. That means you have to want to know.

If you're waiting for God to smack you in the head with a board, you're going to have a long wait. You will seek me and find me when you search for me. This is the malleable heart.

This is the teachable heart. This is the seeking heart. Or we can have the adamant heart, the hard heart into which sin is scratched with a pin of iron and with a point of a diamond.

That was number one. Anybody remember what number two was? Something vegetable. You can be one of two kinds of vegetation.

Either the tree planted by the rivers of water bringing forth his fruit in his season, as it says in Psalm 1, or the shrub in the desert. What's the fate of the shrub in the desert? Remember this from your memory verse? Does not see good when it comes. There's good staring you in the face and you miss it.

What happened when the Lord Jesus walked this earth and looked directly into the brown eyes of people in Judea and in Jerusalem? They looked right at him and crucified him. Did not see good when it came. More about that tonight.

So that's our second image. Either you have a choice. You can either have a soft heart or a hard heart, a seeking heart or a heart into which sin is permanently inscribed.

You can either be the tree that is planted by the rivers of water or you can be the shrub in the desert and even when good comes, you're insensate, insensible. Number three, I went to the potter's house. Both of those, by the way, those first two are in Jeremiah chapter 17.

Jeremiah 18 is Jeremiah responding to God's call to go to the house of the potter where God's word would be revealed. He goes to the house of the potter and what does he see? Two different kinds of clay. The first clay spoils in the potter's hand.

The potter is trying to mold it, trying to make a vessel of honor and the clay says, I don't want to be a vessel of honor and so the potter has to make something else. This is illustrated and amplified in Romans chapter 9. Does not the thing being formed, does not the potter have the right to make whatever he wants out of the clay? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why have you made me thus? God makes a vessel of dishonor out of spoiling clay and the spoiling clay rails against the potter and says, why did you make me a common vessel? Well, because you spoiled in my hands. You did not submit yourself under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time.

You've got to be formed and be malleable and you've got to be baked in the kiln to become that vessel of honor. You don't stay soft clay. This life is where God is forming us and there is a fixed fate that will be determined at the judgment and will be worked out in the kingdoms that are to come.

Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of deliverance. Now is the chance to lay hold of righteousness by faith to become a vessel of honor.

This is our time. So good clay or clay that mars, clay that spoils, clay that doesn't want to hold the shape that the potter is giving it. I don't want to submit under your hand.

I want to do my own thing. Jeremiah 18 that was number three. Number four was also a clay analogy.

This was in Jeremiah 19 and this was primarily the princes and the rulers in Judah. Remember that this was the baked clay and he said, take a flask and break it, shatter it because this represents what these people have become. What's the Lord going to do in the millennial kingdom with his rod of iron? He will rule them with a rod of iron.

He will what? Break them in pieces like a potter's vessel because in the millennium, although it is going to be idealized and there's going to be perfect government, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, King David and David's sons are going to rule in various capacities throughout that time, that thousand years, but there's going to be recalcitrance. There's going to be disobedience. There's going to be incipient and nascent rebellion.

There's going to be discontent. The Lord's not going to rule them with a cooling fan. He's not going to sprinkle healing water on them and they're all going to be wonderfully compliant.

He's going to bust them in the head with a rod of iron and they're going to shatter and be broken because they're still resistant. They are unrepentant. Even though God at the beginning of the millennium, as we will see tonight, is going to take out their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, there's still going to be new generations born.

Israel is going to be in the flesh. They're going to be earthly and there will be children who play with the snakes and who lead about the lions. Remember that? A little child will lead the lion and the lamb and play next to the snake and not be harmed.

The peaceable kingdom. Where do these children come from? They are mortal. They are long-lived.

This is the other side of the symmetry to the pre-flood times when people lived for hundreds of years. If someone dies at the age of 100, they will say he died in his youth. He was just a kid, 100 years old.

Their mortality. Remember when we went through Ezekiel and found that the priesthood that will serve in the millennial temple will sweat. They're going to have to wear a certain kind of garment because they sweat.

Well, that's not the mark of a resurrection body. That's the mark of an earthly body. And mortal, earthly Israel in the earthly millennial kingdom is going to have these mortal characteristics.

They are going to have these mortal characteristics. And some of them are going to be recalcitrant. This is why Satan that has been cast into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years at the end of the 1,000 years is going to be released.

Why didn't God throw him in the lake of fire instead of the pit? Because God works all things together for good and God is going to use Satan in the abyss for 1,000 years. He is going to release him out of Abaddon, out of the pit. And what's he going to do? God's going to use him like a magnet and he is going to draw all of these unrepentant, chafing, angry, bitter, unbelieving, faithless individuals out of the kingdom.

They have grown. They have become numerous. And Satan, when he is released, you know, you remember the parable of the wheat and the tares and how difficult it is to separate tares from wheat.

They look so similar. Well, God is going to use Satan just like a magnet to draw iron filings out of sand and they will be attracted and he will call them and they will come and they will surround the camp of the saints. This is your Gog Magog rebellion at the end of the millennium.

We don't have time to turn to those passages but you can easily find them. But they are baked clay. These are the ones that have been submitted, submissive only because they have been thumped and broken by the rod of iron.

That was number 4, Jeremiah 19. So we have a choice here. What are we? Are we a soft heart or a hard heart? Are we a shrub in the desert or are we a tree planted by the living waters? Are we good clay or are we clay that is marring in the potter's hand? Are we malleable or are we vessels that have to be broken to be useful? And finally, number 5 in Jeremiah chapter 24, I saw two baskets.

One had good figs that were very good and the other had bad figs that were very bad. Those were our images. All of these go back to a fundamental point.

We choose. God is gracious. God does not leave us with no option.

Everyone has an option. What do I choose? What will I be? Which direction will I go? And God honors that choice. He gives us free will and He respects the operation of that free will.

You choose. You decide. What do you want to be? Well, this brings us to our study tonight and if you turn in your Bible back to Jeremiah chapter 23, we see in chapter 23, and we're just going to pick one little part of this chapter because we've already looked at 24, but look at verse 16 and following.

Actually, go back to verse 5, the days are coming says the Lord. This is Jeremiah 23, 5. The days are coming 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 the name by which he will be called. The Lord, our righteousness.

Yahweh Tzedekenu. This is Tzedek with the plural possessive suffix. Tzedek.

Remember Melchizedek, king of righteousness. This is Tzedekenu or Tzedekenu, our righteousness. He shall reign and prosper and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

He's not just the king of righteousness, Melchizedek, but he is the Lord, our righteousness. Yahweh is God's personal name to Israel, His covenant name, the name that He revealed to Israel in the days of Moses. The Lord, our righteousness.

Therefore, verse 7, behold the days are coming says the Lord that they shall no longer say as the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. That was the historic salvation that defined Israel in the Old Testament as a nation, right? They came out a people and went into the land and became a nation. But as the Lord lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.

This is the resurrected Israel and Judah. This is the resurrected and millennial kingdom Israel. They have been brought back from all of the places where they were scattered and they shall dwell in their own land.

But there are false prophets and in the latter part of chapter 23, Jeremiah says, my heart within me is broken because of the prophets. My bones shake. I'm like a drunken man, like a man who wine has overcome because of the Lord and because of His holy words for the land is full of adulterers.

Because of a curse, the land mourns, the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up. Their course of life is evil and their might is not right. Both prophets and priests are profane.

Yes, in my house I have found their wickedness says the Lord. Jeremiah makes this complaint, this sort of woe song, this sad outcry and God says you're right. I have found them in my house says the Lord.

Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery ways. In the darkness they shall be driven on and fall in them for I will bring disaster on them the year of their punishment says the Lord. I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria.

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

They also strengthen the hands of the evil doers so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to me and their inhabitants like Gomorrah. What is the signal, banner, neon sign, sin of Sodom? What is Sodom famous for? Who are called Sodomites? Homosexuality.

And now you are alive in the land of Sodom and you are exposed to the possibility of rebuke and correction and vilification and even legal consequences if you point out what the Bible says about this particular lifestyle, this particular practice, this particular perversion. What is happening today? The church now embraces and welcomes with open arms and says this is not a problem. This isn't a sin.

That was an old thing that went away along with the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. God loves love. If you love somebody, then God loves you.

All you need is love, love, love, love. So this is prescient. This is looking ahead to see the latter days when men call evil good and they call good evil.

You will remember in the book of Genesis that there is a verse in 2 Timothy 4, verse 3, keep your finger in Jeremiah 23, turn to 2 Timothy 4, 2 Timothy 4, just start at the beginning of the chapter, I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Apostle Paul talking to Timothy, a pastor of a church, I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, isn't that what we're talking about? Truth, righteousness and justice, judgment, I charge you preach the word, be ready in season and out of season. Guess what? Preaching against homosexuality is now out of season. It's off limits.

Whether it's in season or out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. But according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, say what will scratch my itching ears. Give me some ear satisfaction.

Wind it up, introduce it, you know, before, during and after with guitars and tambourines and lots of boxes of Kleenex and plenty of emotional uplift. Couch it in terms that are smooth and soothing to my ears. I want a pleasant experience.

Don't be harsh, don't ripple the water. Preach the word, in season, out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort, be patient and teach. This is what we're trying to do.

The time will come they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, I will arbitrate, I will discern, I will decide what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, what should and should not be said. I saw a real interesting article today talking about dignity. And you can probably find this somewhere.

It was a guy writing and he talked about dignity 1.0, the old dignity was dignity was the respect that is due to people because they are made in the image of God. It is externally defined. Everyone should have.

This is what the founding fathers had in mind when they said that you have life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Everyone is entitled to these things regardless of other factors. Everyone has the right to live and to do their best in their circumstances to flourish.

Let them live and they should let you live. Otherwise known as live and let live. You go and do that over there.

I'm going to do this over here. This I accord to you the respect that is due to a fellow human being. I respect your decisions.

I respect your right to self destruct if you so choose. Right. But this was externally defined.

Dignity 2.0 is something different. I will tell you what my dignity deserves. I deserve because of my particular characteristics, my particular handicap, my race, my religion, my set of hereditary features whether they are good or ill.

But I will define for you what disrespect is. You have disrespected me because you didn't sufficiently honor something that I just picked because it makes me feel good. I'll tell you what my dignity requires and deserves and what you should accord to me.

Dignity 1.0 was objective. Dignity 2.0 is subjective and you never know what it's going to be from person to person. You think about this and look at examples of it.

It is either objectivity or subjectivity and today it is subjective. If I decide today that I'm black, then you better treat me as black. If I decide today that I'm a woman, you better treat me as a woman.

If I decide today that I hear voices that tell me that I should be a singer and that I should be listened to or that I should be a preacher of social consciousness and I should be listened to and my dry tribe should go on endlessly and you should listen and you should respect me and you should not stop me or shut me down or tell me I'm wrong or insensitive or anything else. You see what I mean? That's my dignity. You're wounding my dignity if you don't allow me to do whatever I want basically.

Well, you can look that up. It's a really good interesting article. Just Google 1.0 and 2.0 with dignity on it and you'll find it I'm sure.

So this is what God says. These preachers, these prophets are pandering to this. They're playing to this.

Paul predicted that this would happen in the latter days. It happened in the latter days of the kingdom of Judah. That's when Jeremiah is prophesying and it is a classic characteristic of a nation right before the end.

Everyone does what is right in his own eyes. Look at Jeremiah chapter 23 verse 16. Thus says the Lord of hosts.

Here's truth, justice and righteousness from the Lord who lives. Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless.

They speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. What vocabulary words do we use to describe that? They speak subjectively instead of objectively. They are deciding what they think is right, what they think is true, not from the Lord of truth, the Lord of righteousness and the Lord of justice.

They continually say to those who despise me, the Lord has said you shall have peace. People who have gone astray and away are told you're right on, you're doing well, you're going to be blessed, you're going to have peace. And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say no evil shall come upon you.

This is a good thing. They call evil good. They call good evil.

Remember our memory verse in the latter days men shall be lovers of themselves and so on. Verse 18, who has stood in the council of the Lord and perceived and heard his word? Who has marked his word and listened? Not these guys. 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.

But of course, once the door of the ark slams shut, it's a little bit late. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

If they had stood in my council and had caused my people to hear my words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings. 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, says the Lord? I have heard what the prophets have said, who prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart.

Remember Jeremiah 17.9, another one of our memory verses? The heart is what? Deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Now, what is deceit? You take a lie for the truth. You believe something to be true, and it's actually a lie.

You are misled. You think something is a fact, and it's not a fact. You think something is real and true, you believe it, you rely on it, you act on it, and it's not.

This is the nature of our own heart. Our heart is an unreliable compass. I told you once about a Lebanese artillery battery that had established its direction of aim based on magnetic compasses that, unbeknownst to them, were strongly influenced by power poles just a few feet away from their aiming circle.

And so the magnetic needle said, this is north. You take the correction for magnetic to true north, which they applied off the map, and they said, we're straight and true. And they were blowing up their own neighborhoods every time they shot into South Beirut because their reference was not objective.

It was subjective. It was influenced by local forces of which they were not aware. They were deceived, and yet everything looked right.

They could have argued nine ways, and they did, by the way. When I went to the stars, I did a Polaris Kochab reference and said, this is north. And they said, no, it's not.

This north. I said, no, this north. And they said, look at the compass.

And I said, look at the power pole. And so, look at the north star. Do your Polaris Kochab calculation.

The north star has not moved in millennia. Let's go by that, not this aiming circle that you recently set up right next to a giant, I mean, have you ever heard of the right-hand rule and the current going this way and the forces going this way? Right-hand rule, remember that? Out of physics, electricity, current flowing this way, lines of force go this way, and it just pulls your magnetic needle, which is sensitive to magnetic forces, this way. And that's why every time you shoot, people call you in panic and say, please stop shooting.

Anyway, this is the heart. The heart is deceitful above all things. When it's deceitful, we think it's right.

We believe it's true. We're convinced. We're so sure.

And we are surely, surely wrong. We have to have an objective reference. We have to have an objective standard.

You can't trust your instincts when your instincts are corrupt. The heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked. Who can figure that out without the objective reference? Somebody comes in from the outside.

An American Marine comes in and straightens out your lousy French training in artillery. Look at chapter 24. That was the sign of the two baskets of figs.

You're going to be wormy, inedible figs, or you can be good figs. You choose. It is your choice.

Chapter 25, the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiham, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. First year of Nebuchadnezzar. God's been prophesying this for years.

Now in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, the inexorable movement of gigantic forces has begun. These are the words which Jeremiah, the prophet, spoke to all the people of Judah. This is 25-2.

Spoke to all the people of Judah. And to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, From the thirteenth year of Josiah, the son of Ammon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the Lord has come to me, and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened. Now, the twenty-third year, the thirteenth year of Josiah was somewhere in the vicinity of, depending on who you listen to, either 629 or 627 BC.

629, 627, let's just split the difference like a good artillery officer does and say 628. Let's just pick 628. For twenty-three years, Jeremiah has been prophesying.

If you take twenty-three out of twenty-eight, what year are you in? 605. What is the year that Daniel and Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah were carried off to Babylon? 605 BC. This is the year this stuff is going to happen or very near to it.

Twenty-third year. Now, underline in verse three the last five words, but you have not listened. Twenty-three years of information.

Now, by the way, there are some people who did listen, and notice God gave specific information. Look at verse four, the Lord sent you all His servants, the prophets, rising early and sending them. It wasn't delayed, it wasn't laid, it wasn't haphazard, rising early.

What's the end of that verse? You have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear. My son, if you will receive my words and hide my commandments with thee so that you incline your ear. Remember that? You have not inclined your ear.

Verse five, they said, Repent now every one of his evil way and his evil doings. Dwell in the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers forever and ever. Do not go after other gods to serve them.

Do not provoke me to anger with works of your hands, and I will not harm you. Verse seven, Yet

you have not listened to me. Now, if God, people, you hear the argument, well, people are always going to act in their own best interest.

If you just give them the information, they will do what is in their best interest. If God would give sufficient information about hell, nobody would go there because people will act in their own interest and choose against it. Look at these people.

Over and over and over again, God has told them exactly where they stand, exactly why they stand there, and exactly what is going to happen because they stand there. Are they acting in their own best interest? God says, Look, you can dwell in the land. I will reverse all of my pronouncements.

I will take away my judgments. You can live in the land flowing with milk and honey. You can prosper.

You can be blessed. I will be your God. You will be my people.

I will, one of you will put to flight a thousand, all of those blessings. You will not listen. What people don't factor in when they talk about people will act in their own best interest is the hardness of the human heart, the hardness of the human head, the deceitfulness of the heart that says, I just don't believe that.

I discount your statements. Where is your evidence? Jeremiah, where is your evidence that God is going to judge us? Look, we are prosperous. There is a giant vacuum left from where the Assyrians have been taken away.

They had to turn and go to the north, and now their empire has fallen. Look, we are prospering. We are expanding our borders.

Our economy is up. Everything is good. You are doom and gloom and woe.

Look at all these other prophets. You are the only prophet, you and one other guy, who are telling us that bad things are coming. Everybody else says it's good.

Why should we listen to you? The heart is deceitful. It tells you something is true when it's not. It makes you believe something is a fact when it's not.

You did not listen to me. Now, who does listen to God in the face of absence of evidence and in the face of overwhelming opinions by others? Who is going to listen? What were our five examples? It's the seeking heart. It is the tree planted by the water.

It is the malleable clay, right? It is the soft clay that keeps its form. It is the good figs. If you are seeking, you will find.

If you knock, it will be opened. If you ask, it will be given. If you are looking to God in humility, you will get the information, and it will be persuasive to you because God, the Holy Spirit, is the

one conveying it.

He is the one. He is the witness. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, a thing is established.

You have the witness of the Word. You have the witness of God's communicator. You have the witness of the Holy Spirit.

These things conspire in your heart. The Spirit tells us, Abba, Father, the God of truth, the God who lives, and it's better than evidence. The witness of the Holy Spirit, Jesus says, is better than me walking around doing miracles, right? It's a better witness.

Peter says, John says, we have a more certain witness. We have a better testimony than mere physicality. Look at verse 8. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, because you have not listened to my words.

Look at verse 11. This whole land will be a desolation and an astonishment. These nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Now people who aren't listening aren't going to remember this, but the people of God will start the clock. Seventy years. Did Daniel know this prophecy? He absolutely did.

He began praying for the nation when he saw this seventy years coming to a close. Remember, Daniel lived to be a very old man and began to pray. He saw the seventy years.

He remembered the prophecy of Jeremiah. God told Jeremiah, write this stuff down. There's people that are going to need it seventy years from now.

People are listening. Again, you who are sensitive, you who are good figs, who are malleable, who are teachable, who are trees planted by the living water of God's word, God will give us the information we need to survive and prosper even in times of judgment. Just listen and pay attention.

You will be told what you need to know. God made sure that his people had exactly the information. Remember, Jeremiah goes on to tell them, do not resist.

Look at chapter 26. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, verse 2, thus says the Lord, stand in the court of the Lord's house and speak to all the cities of Judah. Stand in the court of the Lord's house.

Who's going to still be there at the court of the Lord's house to hear the words of Jeremiah? The faithful remnant. They're the ones who are going to hear. Speak to the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house.

That small remnant that's still doing what they're supposed to. Give them all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word.

Give them the whole thing. Perhaps, verse 3, everyone will listen and turn from his evil way that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings. Verse 4, chapter 26, you shall say to them, thus says the Lord, if you will not listen to me to walk in my law, which I have set before you to heed the words of my servants, the prophets whom I sent to you rising up early and sending them, but you have not heeded.

I'm going to make this house like Shiloh. I will make this city a curse to the nations of the earth. The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord.

It happened when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him saying, you will surely die. Skip down to verse 11, the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and all the people saying, this man deserves to die for he has prophesied against this city. As you have heard with your ears, Jeremiah said in verse 12, the Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city, all the words that you have heard.

Now therefore amend your ways and your doings and obey the voice of the Lord, your God. And the Lord will relent concerning the doom that he has pronounced against you. It could not be more clear.

It is a choice. It is a choice. The faithful remnant is going to speak up and this is the difference that you can make, that we can make as a faithful remnant.

If you read this next section, remember the priests and the false prophets saying this man deserves to die. But the princes and the people in verse 16 said to the priests and the prophets, this man does not deserve to die. That remnant that had come to the house of the Lord to worship, that faithful minority says, no, you're wrong.

He does not deserve to die. Now the priests and the prophets are the religious authorities. Somebody stood up and said, no, you're wrong.

This is a good message. It's from God. Don't kill this guy.

And the upshot of that is they give some previous examples. We've had prophets before that spoke and warned us in the days of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah listened and we were not destroyed.

We should do that again. But look at verse 20. There was also a man who prophesied in the name of the Lord, Uriah, the son of Shemaiah of Kiriath Yareem, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah.

He said the same thing. We had another prophet with the same message. When Jehoiachin, the king, when his mighty men and princes heard his words, the king sought to put him to death.

When Uriah heard it, he was afraid and fled and went to Egypt. He was a prophet and he faithfully spoke the word. But when he found out the king was going to kill him, fear got the best of him.

He abandoned his post and he ran and he went to Egypt. Jehoiachin sent men who tracked him down, brought him back and they killed him. Fear is not the answer.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and of sobriety, a sound mind, self-control. Stick, stand, do not be intimidated, do not be afraid when you are threatened. We are to stick, we are to stay, we are to stand.

Look at verse 23. They brought Uriah from Egypt, brought him to Jehoiachin, the king, who killed him with the sword and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. Now, by the way, this section, when Jeremiah says, God has sent me to tell you the truth and there is a controversy, as they say in Britain over, and there's a choice here.

We saw those choices, soft heart, hard heart, soft clay, hard clay, shrub in the desert, tree by the water, right? Here's another choice. You've had two prophets here who both spoke the same thing. One of them is going to be preserved, Jeremiah, the other was killed.

What's going to happen when the Lord Jesus comes from his father, speaking, going to the temple courtyard, throwing out the money changers? You've taken my father's house and made it a den of thieves. What are they going to do? Are they going to kill the one who speaks in God's name or are they going to recognize his message? There is just enough of a remnant to preserve Jeremiah here. Nobody spoke up for Uriah, and Uriah didn't stick.

Do you think the Lord Jesus looked back at this and said, I can't run? I'm going to stay, I'm going to preach, I'm going to be Jeremiah and not Uriah? The hand of a Hycum, verse 24, the son of Shefan was with Jeremiah so that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death. One man made a difference. One man stood up and represented this minority opinion and Jeremiah lives, and Jeremiah is going to continue to prophesy from 605 all the way down to 586 after the destruction of the city and for years afterward.

You can make a difference. You stick, you stay, you stand. You represent the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth, the Holy Spirit, who convinces the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

That testimony is reflected in us. It is our hope. It is our assurance.

It is our objective standard of truth, righteousness and justice. The Lord lives, and he lives in us. The one who has my words and keeps them, I and my father will come to him and make our home with him.

If God before us, who can be against us? Right? Now is the appointed time. These are the latter days. People have itching ears.

People want to suppress, pervert, distort the word of God. We are its representatives. If not us, who? Do not be intimidated.

Be Jeremiah. God will provide a Hycum, the son of Shefan. We can join together as people who represent the word of God.

And if we go, if we are not prepared, if we are not prepared to be persecuted for righteousness sake, what did the Lord Jesus say? Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you for my name's sake. Your reward is great. Why hang on to what you cannot keep when you can gain something you can never lose? Well, this is our decision point.

Decide what kind of heart, decide what kind of clay, decide what kind of tree, decide what kind of fig, because we are at that point in this nation, in this time in history, and there's nobody that has a better chance to reflect the word of God than us. So it's exciting. It's an opportunity.

I don't see the downward trend in our nation as a problem. I see it as an opportunity to shine like lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

We'll pick up our study of Jeremiah next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for your appointment of our lives to live in this time, in this age, reinforced and motivated and strengthened by your word and your spirit.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths and seek the outworking of them, the purpose of them, and the application of them in our lives, that your Holy Spirit will guide us, enlighten us, strengthen us, reinforce our faith. As the man said, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief, so that we can truly represent the Lord Jesus now and in ages to come. We pray these things in his name.

Amen.