

Contend For The Faith  
Jan. 29, 2020 Lesson #4 OT False Prophets

II Pet. 2:1a But there were false prophets also among the people [nation of Israel] After Israel's exodus from Egypt, God warned that FALSE PROPHETS would arise.

Deut. 13:1-5 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,<sup>2</sup> And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

<sup>3</sup> Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth [testing] you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. <sup>4</sup> Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

<sup>5</sup> And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

In Deut. 13:6-10: He said even if it is your brother, child or the wife you cherish, you must not follow after these false gods. Rather, you must not have pity on him, but expose him so he can be put to death.

Extreme? People today would shrug it off as no big deal. Moses KNEW that false teachers would infect many, causing irreparable damage to God's people.

I Kings 22: Jehoshaphat acts on the advice of false prophets rather than the warning from a prophet of God.

- Jehoshaphat made a foolish alliance with King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of the northern kingdom who worshipped false gods.
- A marriage was arranged between King Ahab's daughter Athaliah and Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram.
- As a descendant of David, Jehoshaphat should have kept his distance from Ahab and never allowed the Davidic line to mingle with that of Ahab.
- Nine years later King Ahab invited King Jehoshaphat to a feast in the capital city of his kingdom, Samaria.
- At the feast King Ahab asked Jehoshaphat, 'Will you join me and go to war to capture Ramoth Gilead?'
- Jehoshaphat replied, 'My people are your people, my horses are your horses but first we need to get God's advice.'
- Ahab summoned around 400 of his false prophets and asked, 'Should I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or should I refrain?'
- 'Go,' they answered, 'for the Lord will give it into the king's hand.' Their leader, Zedekiah, who had made iron horns, declared, 'The Lord says you will gore the Arameans until they

are destroyed.' Jehoshaphat was not convinced and asked, 'Is there no longer a prophet of the Lord we can ask?'

- 'There is still one prophet of the Lord known as Micaiah,' Ahab answered, 'but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad.' Jehoshaphat insisted Micaiah was summoned.
- The messenger advised the prophet, 'Look, the other prophets are all predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs and speak favorably.'
- But Micaiah said, 'As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me.'
- When the prophet of the Lord arrived, King Ahab asked him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or not?'
- The prophet spoke mockingly, 'Attack and be victorious, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand.'
- The king said to him, 'How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?' Micaiah then gave him the real message from the Lord.
- 'I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd. I heard the Lord saying, "These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace."'
- Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, 'Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?'
- Micaiah continued. 'I saw the Lord sitting on His throne among the multitudes of heaven and someone asked, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' Finally a spirit offered to entice the king by deceiving all his prophets. The Lord has decreed disaster for you King Ahab.'
- Zedekiah, the leader of Ahab's false prophets, went and slapped Micaiah in the face.
- 'Which way did the spirit from the Lord go when he went from me to speak to you?' he asked. Micaiah replied, 'You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room.'
- Ahab ordered that Micaiah be put in prison and fed only on bread and water until he returned safely from the battle. Micaiah declared, 'If you return safely, then the Lord has not spoken through me.' Then he added, 'Mark my words, all you people!'
- Foolishly, Jehoshaphat ignored God's warning through Micaiah. He joined forces with King Ahab and set off to attack Ramoth-Gilead. He even went along with Ahab's plan that he would go to war in royal robes but Ahab would disguise himself.'
- The king of Aram had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, 'Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel.' When the commanders saw Jehoshaphat in his royal robes they turned to attack him, thinking he was Ahab.
- But when Jehoshaphat cried out and they realized it was not Ahab, they stopped pursuing him.
- Ahab, in his disguise, thought he was safe, but an arrow shot at random hit him between the sections of his armor. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died.
- The battle was lost but Jehoshaphat returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem.

- Jehu, the prophet, asked him. 'Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?' 'Because of this, the wrath of the Lord is on you. However, there is some good in you, for you have rid the land of the Asherah poles and have set your heart on seeking God.
- The king learned his lesson and set out once more to turn the people of Judah and the hill country of Ephraim back to God.

Ezek. 13 Ezekiel, the prophet of God, attacked the source of the people's blind optimism.

The source: The Message Of The False Prophets

Ezekiel spoke against the false prophets who were actually using the occult practices forbidden to the people of Israel. [Deut. 18:9-14]

Ezek. 13:1-16 God declares four times: false prophets saw vanity [nothingness] and spoke lies.

- God had not called them [Jer. 23:21-22] nor given them their messages, yet they CLAIMED to be His prophets.
- They spoke out of their own imaginations, and their "inspiration" was self-induced.

Imagination: Hebrew = to fashion something as a potter would fashion a vessel

- It is scheming and philosophizing
- Heart and mind were set against God.
- Fashioned wicked philosophies
- Espoused filthy causes
- Tried to pour society and the culture into THEIR MOLD; reshape society
- Ezekiel compared them to jackals that lived as scavengers in the deserted ruins of the land. They cared only for themselves, they did nothing to improve the situation and they lived off the FEARS of the people.

Wiersbe: In times of crisis, there are always religious opportunists who prey on weak and ignorant people who are seeking cheap assurance and comfort.

- Ezekiel compared them to workmen who failed to build something that would last.
- The "spiritual" wall that had protected the Jewish people for centuries had fallen into ruin and prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah were trying to rebuild and strengthen the wall by proclaiming the Word and calling the people back to God.
- The false prophets were like workmen who whitewashed a weak wall to make it look sturdy, because they PROMISED PEACE when God had promised destruction. [Ezek. 13:10, 16; Jer. 6:14; 7:8; 8:11]
- A TRUE PROPHET tells people what they NEED to hear, but a false prophet tells them what they WANT to hear. [II Tim. 4:1-5]
- A true servant of God builds carefully on a strong foundation and keeps the wall in good repair, but a hireling build carelessly and whitewashes things to make them look good.

Ezek. 13:16 "These prophets who prophesy in Israel see visions of peace for her when there is no peace." In verse 17, he's told to set his face against those false prophets.

"Those false prophets hunt down the lives of My people," He says.

No wonder Jeremiah said in Jer. 5:30: An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land:

<sup>31</sup> The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their *own* authority;

And My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?

Jeremiah was about 20 years old when God called him as a prophet.

For 40 years he served as God's spokesman to Judah, but when he spoke, nobody listened.

Consistently and passionately, he urged the people to act, but nobody moved.

Jeremiah underwent severe deprivation to deliver his prophecies.

- He was thrown into prison and into a cistern.
- He was taken to Egypt against his will. [Jer. 43]
- He was rejected by his neighbors, [Jer. 11:19-21] his family, [Jer. 12:6] the false priests and prophets [Jer. 20:1-2; 28:1-17], friends [20:10] his audience [26:8] and the kings.

Throughout his life, Jeremiah stood alone, declaring God's messages of doom, announcing the new covenant, and weeping over the fate of his beloved country.

In God's eyes, Jeremiah was a great success which involves obedience and faithfulness.

- Regardless of opposition and personal cost, Jeremiah courageously and faithfully proclaimed the Word of God.

Theme of his message: REPENT and TURN TO GOD or He will punish.

Key Verse: Jer. 2:19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Jer. 6:1-3 God had spoken to the people through His true prophet and warned them that judgment was coming.

God spoke to the Babylonian army over which He had command. He shared His strategy.

Jer. 6:4-5 Prepare ye war against her; arise and let us go up at noon.

- Make a surprise attack at noon, the hottest time of the day when nobody would expect it.
- Plan to continue the attack through the night when most armies retire.
- Prepare = to sanctify or consecrate

The Babylonians considered this war a holy crusade for their gods. [Joel 3:9; Micah 3:5]

Jer. 6:6-15 God directs the attack! He told the Babylonian army WHAT to do!

- Chop down trees and build ramps against the walls of the city.
- He told them WHY they were doing it. Jerusalem was like a well that pours out filthy water and the city must be punished.
- He told them HOW to do it: with precision and thoroughness; the way gleaners go over a vineyard so as not to miss any fruit.

Jeremiah lamented: Nobody Was Listening to his warning. They refused to hear God's Word.

Jer. 6:11-14 Jeremiah was full of the Lord's fury and weary of holding it in. He said God would pour it out on all. Rulers and priests would not escape. They falsely said, "Peace, peace when there is no peace." False prophets were lying because JUDGMENT was coming, not peace.

But they were saying what the people wanted to hear because they were emissaries of Satan who wanted to keep the people in sin and lead them away from repentance.

Listened to the wrong prophets & teachers: Lam. 2:14 Your prophets have seen for you False and foolish *visions*; And they have not exposed your iniquity So as to restore you from captivity, But they have seen for you false and misleading oracles.

Lam. 4:13 Because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, Who have shed in her midst The blood of the righteous,

Jer. 6:15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

Jer. 6:16-23 God Delivers The Verdict

- Are the people guilty? YES! Do they deserve punishment? YES
- God called the Gentiles and the earth to bear witness that He had done all He could to spare them this judgment. [6:18-19]

Isa. 30:21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

- They WOULD NOT walk on His path. They would not listen to HIS PROPHETS.
- Nevertheless, they continued to bring Him their hypocritical worship.
- God gave them the right way, but they rejected it. There would be no escape.
- The Babylonian army would be a formidable obstacle to anybody trying to flee the wrath of God. The daughter of Zion could not escape.

Wiersbe: Pained by the sins of his people, declaring unpopular messages that majored on judgment, and perplexed by what the Lord was allowing him to suffer, Jeremiah paid a great price to be faithful to his calling.

Jer. 14 Because of the sins of the people, God was withholding the life-giving rains and thus keeping His covenant promise to Israel. There wasn't any water to be found. So the Jews turned to God and prayed, but their prayers were insincere and without repentance.

- The people of Judah asked God to help them for His own name's sake. After all, they argued, "it's Your reputation that's at stake, because we're called by Your name."

God responded: Not by sending rain but by announcing judgment. [Jer. 14:10]

- God told Jeremiah not to pray for the people. [14:11; 7:16; 11:14]
- His longsuffering had run out. He was determined to punish them for their sins.
- The nation was destined for the sword, famine and pestilence. [14:12]

In Jer. 14:13-16 Jeremiah said, "But is it really the fault of the people? Aren't the people being led astray by the false prophets who are promising them deliverance and peace?

They are the real culprits." [Jer. 5:12; 6:14; 8:11]

- God agreed the prophets were leading the people astray through their false visions and lies. He assured Jeremiah they would suffer for what they had done. The day would come when they and their families would be slain and nobody would bury their corpses.

- The people are responsible for their own actions because they should have known that the Lord had not sent these prophets.
- There were 2 tests of a true prophet in Israel.
  - Predictions were 100% accurate. [Deut. 18:20-22]
  - Their messages AGREED with the Law of God. [Deut. 13:1-18]
- Any prophet who permitted the worship of idols, contrary to God's laws, was a false prophet. [Isa. 8:20]
- Even if a professed prophet performed miracles, he was a counterfeit if God's revealed truth in the WORD did not support the message.
- Miracles are NO GUARANTEE of a divine call. [II Thess. 2:7-12]

Jer. 14:14 Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spoke unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.

Jeremiah focused on 3 areas in the false prophets' lives that were especially abhorrent.

#### A. Jer. 23:9-15 The Disgraceful Conduct of the False Prophets

True prophets know how serious it is to be called by God to declare His word. They accept the responsibility with fear and trembling. When they see self-styled prophets living like sinners, it grieves them. Jeremiah had a broken heart and trembled like a drunken man!

He realized what the false prophets were doing to the people and the land. It made him sick!

Ps. 119:53 Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

- False prophets were committing adultery and thronging the houses of prostitution. [Jer. 5:7]
- Then they would go to the temple and pretend to worship Jehovah, [Jer. 23:11] turning God's house into a den of thieves. [Jer. 7:9-11]
- Adultery also includes their worship of idols, turning from the true God [to whom Israel was married] and being unfaithful to their covenant promise.
- Baal was the Canaanite rain god to whom the Jews were prone to turn for help in times of drought. [I Kings 17-18]. His worship included "sacred prostitution." Jerusalem was becoming like Sodom and Gomorrah.
- The land was suffering a severe drought [Jer. 23:10] because the false prophets led the people to violate the terms of their covenant with God. The Lord promised to send the early and latter rains if they obeyed. [Deut. 11:10-15; 28:12], but He also warned them that He would make the heavens brass and the earth iron if they disobeyed Him. [Jer. 11:16-17]
- Because of the curse, the land lies parched. [Jer. 23:10]
- But the sinners refused to escape, even though God had promised to judge them in due time. [Jer. 23:12, 15]
- False prophets had led the northern kingdom astray [Jer. 23:13] and now they were leading Judah astray.

Jer. 23:14-17 "Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood, and they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom and her inhabitants like Gomorrah. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, 'Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood and make them drink poisonous water [of gall], for from the prophets of Jerusalem profaneness has gone forth into all the land.' [Rev. 8:10-11 Wormwood is a star that falls on bodies of water making them bitter and killing many.]

## B. False Prophets Dishonest Message

### 1. Offered the people a false hope

Jer. 23:16-17 Thus says the Lord of hosts, Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They make you vain [worthless]; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto everyone that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

This was a popular message and the frightened people grabbed it and held on to it.

But they were saying what the people wanted to hear because they were emissaries of Satan who wanted to keep the people in sin and lead them away from repentance.

- They had NOT heard this message in God's council; made it up out of their own hearts.
- Instead of peace, a storm was brewing from the LORD.

Jer. 23:19-20 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. <sup>20</sup> The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

### 2. They ministered under a false authority. [Jer. 23:21-24]

Jer. 23:21-22 He says, "I didn't send these prophets but they ran. I didn't speak to them, but they prophesied." But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

Jer. 23:24-26 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD.

Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. <sup>25</sup> I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. <sup>26</sup> How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

The false prophets taught a popular "theology" that made it convenient for people to be religious and still live in sin.

Consider: Because they listened to lies, the people believed lies about God. What we believe about God determines how we live.

### 3. The False Prophets Spoke Under A False Inspiration [Jer. 23:25-32]

- They depended on dreams and delusions of the mind. They even plagiarized messages from one another.

Wiersbe: "Compared to the nourishing wheat of the WORD, their messages were like straw. You couldn't eat it, build with it or be warmed by it."

Jer. 23:29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

- The message of a true prophet is like a hammer that can tear down and build up.
- The WORD is like fire that consumes water and purifies whatever it touches.

Jeremiah had the WORD burning in his heart [Jer. 20:9] and on his lips. [Jer. 5:14]

- He was God's assayer using the fire of the Word to test the lives of the people. [6:27]

#### C. False Prophets' Disrespectful Attitude

God cautioned Jeremiah not to encourage the careless attitude of the priests, people and false prophets when they asked him, "What is the burden of the Lord?"

- This phrase was almost a cliché and used to poke fun at God's true prophet.
- Jeremiah would reply: You are the burden. [23:33]

Why should the false prophets ask for an oracle from the Lord when Jeremiah had already told them what God wanted them to hear? If they hadn't obeyed what God already commanded, why should He tell them more?

- False prophets twisted or distorted God's truth to make it mean what they wanted. Yet they called their messages "the oracles of the Lord."

Jer. 28 Hananiah prophesied the swift destruction of Babylon as it if was the word of God.

But Jeremiah, the true prophet, prophesied the servitude of Israel to the Babylonians.

Hananiah was popular and though he lied, the people believed him and they hated Jeremiah.

The people were so deceived and so won over by the false prophets that Isaiah says the people said to the prophets, Isa. 30:9-13

That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD:

<sup>10</sup> Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:

<sup>11</sup> Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

<sup>12</sup> Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon:

<sup>13</sup> Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

II Pet. 2:1a But there were false prophets also among the people [nation of Israel] even as there shall be false teachers among you,