

## Jeremiah 23

**Read Jeremiah 23:1-2:** The scriptures were written on scrolls with no chapters or verses. Sometimes it's helpful to see what the previous chapter may have to do with. God is describing bad shepherds (evil kings). He is using poetic justice to treat them as they have treated his people. Chapter 22 was about how God would dispose of wicked kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah.

Kings of Israel (North)		Kings of Judah (South)	
Jeroboam 1	Disobedient	Rehoboam	Disobedient
Nadab	Disobedient	Abijam	Disobedient
Baasha	Disobedient	Asa	Obedient
Elah	Disobedient	Jehoshaphat	Obedient
Zimri	Disobedient	Jehoram	Disobedient
Omri	Disobedient	Ahaziah	Disobedient
Ahab	Disobedient	Athaliah (queen)	Murderer
Ahaziah	Disobedient	Joash	Obedient
Jehoram (Joram)	Disobedient	Amaziah	Obedient
Jehu	Disobedient	Azariah (Uzziah)	Obedient
Jehoahaz	Disobedient	Jotham	Obedient
Jehoash (Joash)	Disobedient	Ahaz	Particularly Horrible
Jeroboam II	Disobedient	Hezekiah	Completely Faithful
Zechariah	Disobedient	Manasseh	Particularly Horrible
Shallum	Disobedient	Amon	Disobedient
Menahem	Disobedient	Josiah	Very Faithful
Pekiah	Disobedient	Johaohaz	Disobedient
Pekah	Disobedient	Jehoiakim	Disobedient
Hoshea	Disobedient	Jehoiachin	Disobedient
		Zedekiah	Disobedient

Wicked kings (bad shepherds) are described here as *destroying and scattering* the flock. A shepherd, by definition, is a *companion* and a *keeper*. It is not one who rules from a distance. God's most prize possession is his people. Having the care, custody and control of God's sheep has an extremely high accountability. Bringing in or allowing idolatry (imaginary or virtual rules for living) is essentially to invite demonic control. It's the worst thing that the King could have done. It is to un-do the Law and societal standards for sustainability. It is disbanding the sheep to the wolves. To create foreign alliances with pagan nations is to take the eyes of the people off of God, and trust in men. These false hopes led to the deportation and death of the entire flock. The king's adoption of foreign pagan allies was terrible for their people. Even so, it all works together with what is going on with the people. God gives us leaders according to the choices that we have made.

*“I will give children to be their princes, And babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed, Every one by another and every one by his neighbor; The child will be insolent toward the elder, And the base toward the honorable.” (Isaiah 3:4-5)*

**Read Jeremiah 23:3-8:** God hates the realities of disciplinary actions, but he is committed to it. He wants us all to live on.

*I will make justice the measuring line, And righteousness the plummet; The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, And the waters will overflow the hiding place. Your covenant with death will be annulled, And your agreement with Sheol will not stand; When the overflowing scourge passes through, Then you will be trampled down by it. As often as it goes out it will take you; For morning by morning it will pass over, And by day and by night; It will be a terror just to understand the report.” For the bed is too short to stretch out on, For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon— That He may do His work, His awesome work, And bring to pass His act, His unusual act. (Isaiah 28)*

In all cases, God’s selection of leaders is for our ultimate repentance, healing and benefit. Israel became uninhabitable, like the pre-flood world. It had to be emptied and cleansed to refill and re-use. It had become a contaminated container. Leaders would have to be re-appointed in the future, to keep the people safe. Our leaders are to keep our lives and cultures in tact.

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. (Romans 13:1)*

*Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him. (Daniel 2:20-22)*

There are man's ways and God’s ways. God is comparing how God himself will oversee government during the millennial Kingdom on earth. There will be no more scattering and destroying of God’s people. It will be a time of healing and re-connecting with God. God honored Abram by creating the children of Israel and the Jews as his people. God honored David by having Jesus born into his family tree.

*But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, “Go and tell My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?’ ” ’ Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people,*

*over Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house. “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (2 Samuel 7)*

We serve a God of fresh starts. Jesus is called *the branch* from Jesse’s stump. The Jews got cut off, and supernatural regrowth occurred. Jesus is the root and the shoot. Instead of Jesus, we will refer to Jesus as *Jehovah Tsidknu* (The LORD is our righteousness.). That will be his name in the millennium.

- “*‘In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS [Jehovah Tsidkenu]’ ” (Jeremiah 33:15, 16).*
  - **The Bible is clear that we have no righteousness of our own.** “*There is none righteous, no, not one . . . All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10, 23). Even those things we think are righteous about ourselves are like soiled rags (Isaiah 64:6).*

Israel will no longer be the poster child of men running from God. They will be the poster child of blessed men. Israel will dominate all of the nations of the world. Outsiders will try to cultivate privileged relationships with Jews.

One question that comes up is regarding David acting as the millennial prince under Jesus the King. Is this figurative language, describing Jesus as *David*...or is this a resurrected David acting as co-regent? It sounds like David will be Jesus’ right-hand man.

*“David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them (Ezekiel 37:24)*

*Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days. (Hosea 3:5)*

*But they shall serve the LORD their God, And David their king, Whom I will raise up for them.  
(Jeremiah 30:9)*

**Read Jeremiah 23:9-14:** Jeremiah was caught between both worlds. He saw how awesome it was during good King Josiah's reign. He saw the resulting fully re-instituted Passover, the full temple choir, and he saw all of the cults wiped out. He felt the power of God's Spirit coursing through him. You could almost say he had no need for faith, because he actually experienced God firsthand. Then Jeremiah saw how Josiah's evil sons became kings and got taken over by Egypt and Babylon. He saw the filthy priests and the corrupt legal system abuses. It was as if there were imposter priests and kings who commandeered the flock onto destruction. Jeremiah could see it clearly. The people were fully into sinful lifestyles. This all had to stop! Murder and land stealing was rampant. It was awful to see so many people die...but it was worse to see unwanted babies killed, prostitution everywhere and drunks running things. It was so bad that the whole thing had to be wiped out and start fresh.

Jeremiah saw God's plan and he saw the moral failure everywhere in his country. It was too much to reconcile. He lived in between the tension of God's absolutes and his countrymen's complete disregard for him. This must have made him cringe. He had a vivid view of what was coming their way....and he could not do anything about it. He knows and sees in advance the crushing disasters for ignoring God.

Jeremiah is now asking God to have the culprits responsible for these bad decisions to be eliminated. The false prophets and idolatry had to be stopped for the people to have any chance of a future. These fools are getting people to trade good family dynamics for broken family units and disunity and total confusion. The Devil knows how to sell trash. The evil prophets are backing the evil doers for money and prestige. Jeremiah is asking God to kill the wolves to save the flock.

**Read Jeremiah 23:15-32:** False prophecy is all about comforting yourself. It's easy to tell the people what they want to hear; especially if you think that nothing is going to change. Once the results of your sins catch up; you will have a lot of crow to eat. God says that the false prophets would eat wormwood and gall. Those are the most bitter things that are known. These false prophets have been able to drop poison on their countrymen in the form of false prophecy. Now the anguish of soul and bitterness will rest on them. They sold their people out for popularity.

How does a person become a false prophet? These verses tell us. They speak of what is in their own imagination. In other words, it seems logical or likely to them, without vetting it through prayer or scripture.

*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, (Proverbs 21:2)*

We can all be sincere, but wrong. It can be hard to distinguish between God talking to me and my own thoughts. Our ideas need to line up with scripture. Obviously, these are people not in conversation with God. If they were, they would have a sense of what is really happening.

*No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you (John 15:15)*

## 7 Distinguishing Marks of a True Prophet

### 1. The true prophet never used divination, sorcery, or astrology.

See [Deuteronomy 18:9-14](#); [Ezekiel 12:24](#); [Micah 3:7](#). The source of the prophet's message was God Himself.

### 2. The true prophet never tailored the message to cater to the desires of the people.

See [Jeremiah 8:11](#); [28:8](#); [Ezekiel 13:10](#).

The false prophets, or “pillow prophets” as some have described them, spoke the message that would bring them popularity and money. They were the “Fortune 500” prophets, the religious opportunists (see [Micah 3:5-6](#), [11](#)).

The true prophet spoke God's unadulterated message regardless of personal loss, shame, and even physical harm.

### 3. The true prophet maintained personal integrity and character.

See [Isaiah 28:7](#); [Jeremiah 23:11](#); [Hosea 9:7-9](#); [Micah 3:5](#), [11](#); [Zephaniah 3:4](#).

Jesus said that true and false prophets will be known by their fruits, that is, by what they do and say (see [Matthew 7:15-20](#)).

### 4. The true prophet was willing to suffer for the sake of the message.

When the prophet Micaiah, son of Imlah, prophesied the defeat of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, he was put in prison and was given nothing but bread and water ([1 Kings 22:27-28](#)).

Jeremiah was cast into the dungeon of Malchiah the king's son when he declared the Word of the Lord saying, "Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but those who surrender to the Babylonians will live" ([Jeremiah 38:4-13](#)).

## **5. The true prophet announced a message that was consistent with the Law and the messages of other true prophets.**

See [Jeremiah 26:17-19](#).

The true prophet's message must neither contradict nor disagree with the previous revelation of truth, but rather should confirm and build upon that body of truth (see [Deuteronomy 13:1-3](#)).

## **6. The true prophet, when predicting future events, had a 100 percent success rate.**

See [Deuteronomy 18:21-22](#).

Unlike modern psychics, 25 percent (or even 99 percent) was not good enough! If alleged prophets were not 100 percent accurate, the people were to take them outside the city to stone them to death (see [Deuteronomy 18:20](#)).

## **7. The true prophet sometimes had the message authenticated by a miracle**

Today, the world is all about doing what the moment dictates, in the absence of a moral code. Times where this thinking prevailed are recorded. They have been times of wicked schemes and much destruction among countrymen.





*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25)*

To be a legitimate prophet you need to have a perfect track record.

*“Don’t say that,” the LORD replied, “for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you...Get up and get dressed. Go out, and tell them whatever I tell you to say. Do not be afraid of them, or I will make you look foolish in front of them.” (Jeremiah 1:7, 17 NLT)*

*<sup>f</sup>“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb <sup>g</sup>on the day of the assembly, when you said, <sup>h</sup>‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the LORD said to me, <sup>i</sup>‘They are right in what they have spoken. <sup>j</sup>I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. <sup>k</sup>And I will put my words in his mouth, and <sup>l</sup>he shall speak to them all that I command him. <sup>m</sup>And whoever will <sup>n</sup>not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)*

God compares his word to the wheat berry, and the lies to the surrounding paper-like chaff. The chaff is supposed to be separated and burned. And the wheat grain is supposed to be collected and saved for usage and need.

*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and*

*fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew 3:11-12)*

The best preventative to false prophecy is to make sure that the people are in the word themselves. That is what prevents televangelists and false prophets from misleading the people.

*Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:10-11)*

*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, (2 Peter 1:19-20)*

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. (2 Timothy 2:15-18)*

**Read Jeremiah 23:33-40:** We need to be clear on what God has said. That is our standard.

*You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:2)*

*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. (James 3:1-5)*