

PROSPERITY

Jeremiah 23 is a powerful (and practical), chapter. Here is an inditement against the false prophets. The Lord gives quite a list of evils which these false prophets have brought about. Let's look at a few of them.

V. 1. *They destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord,* (see Ps. 100). Not the goats or the heathens. It is the Lord's people which they are destroying. **V. 2.** *And drive them away--* The picture here would be of false shepherds driving sheep away from the green pastures where there is plenty of food which will keep them healthy. They drive them into the weeds and make them graze there. **V. 3.** *out of all the countries--* Not only did they drive them away from the green pastures but caused them to be scattered world-wide. **V. 4.** *fear..* They caused the people of God to fear and tremble. **V. 10.** Adulterers prosper. Swearing is common place. Their course is evil as violence fills the land. **V. 13.** *They caused my people Israel to error.* **V. 15.** *They caused profaneness to go forth into all the land.* The people of God, as a result of these false prophets, are given over to hypocrisy. **V. 14.** *They strengthen the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: They are all of them unto me as Sodom and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.* Rather than bringing about repentance, they only strengthened the evil doer in his wickedness. The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. **V. 27.** *They cause my people to forget my name and to turn from the Lord to Baal* (the gods of this world). **V. 30.** *They steal my words..* from the neighbour.. **V. 36.** *They have perverted the words of the living God.*

Keep in mind that this is addressed to the pastors who are set over God's people. Not to the heathen priests, etc..

In short, under these false prophets: 1.) Fear and trembling prevailed. Adulteries, swearing, violence and evil of all kinds proliferated among God's people. 2.) The Lord and His word were forgotten and replaced with the gods of this world, (Baal-Humanism). 3.) The people were led into error of all kinds, bringing down God's judgment upon them. The result was their departure from Him, His word and His scattering them world-wide. All of this within the congregation of the Lord, not the pagans. The false prophets brought the curse of God upon His people.

We have seen what they did, drove God's people away from Him and into evil of all kinds, bringing God's judgment upon them. Now, how did they do this? Verse 17 sums up all of it. Here we see the method these false prophets used to bring about all of the mentioned evil and wickedness. *They say still unto them that despise* (despise would be to refuse to hear and do His law-word) *me the Lord hath said. Ye shall have*

peace; and they say unto everyone that walketh after the imagination (stubbornness) *of his own heart, no evil shall come upon you.*

The man of God (Jeremiah in this case), was warning the people of God that their sin was forcing God to judge them. The law of God (Deut. 28-31), required this action by God against their sin. These false prophets were telling the same people, "Nah, Jeremiah is a legalist. We have God's mercy and grace. We don't have to worry about that. God won't do evil. We are His special people, therefore exempt from His wrath. His wrath is against the pagans, not us. God has not ordained us to wrath. Don't let Jeremiah scare you." (See Zech. 1:12; Hosea 13:9, etc..) **V. 16,** (v. 26), notice their message was from their own hearts. The message was according to how they imagined it should be and not according to the revealed word of God.

Next, why were these false prophets giving such soothing and comforting messages of peace and prosperity. **V. 11,** these messengers themselves are profane. **V. 14,** they are filthy, they commit adultery, and walk in lies. In other words, they themselves were filthy, therefore they teach that God won't judge His people for their sin, in confidence that He won't judge theirs.

Next, where are these wicked messengers of peace and prosperity found? **V. 11,** *in my house have I found this wickedness.* This is pretty straight forward. They stand in the front of God's people, and in the name of the Lord claim to be delivering the message of the Lord. Yet that message contains no judgment against the sins of God's people, II Pet. 2:1-3.

Next, the result. Jeremiah preached repentance and faith. Return to the law of God and God will deliver and prosper. These false prophets spoke words of mockery against Jeremiah and soothing words of prosperity to the people, v. 22, these soothing words prevented the people from turning from their evil ways, and from the evil of their doings. The men of God warned and the false prophets cried, "Legalist. He is trying to place us under the law. We are under grace." It isn't hard to imagine which message the people of God choose. In other words, **THE GOSPEL OF PROSPERITY** prevented repentance which would have spared the judgment of God against their wickedness. See v. 2.

Then lastly, here is the heart of every man of God as he sees the people of God flock after **THE GOSPEL OF PROSPERITY** as he tries to deliver the whole council of God. **V. 9,** *mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets* (false prophets of peace and prosperity); *all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness.*

Let's make one more point here. Involved in this was a mixed worship of Jehovah God and the use of the Teraphim. This Teraphim (a heathen method of

