

The Unrighteous Reactions

Jeremiah 26

Jeremiah 26:1-7 – *“In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord, saying, ² ‘Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord’s house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word. ³ Perhaps 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.’ ⁴ And 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, ⁵ to heed the words of My servants the prophets whom I sent to you, both rising up early and sending them (but you have not heeded), ⁶ then I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.””*

⁷ So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord.”

Background Notes

The date of this sermon was 609 BC, at *“the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah”* (v1). King Josiah was tragically killed in 609 BC when he tried to interfere with the battle plans of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt.

We believe that this sermon in chapter 26 is the same as the “Temple Sermon” in Jeremiah 7, because it was given at the same time, and in the same place. More of the content of the sermon was given in chapter 7, while chapter 26 provided more of the people’s response and reaction to the sermon.

The sermon was given on one of the major feast days, because it was described as a time when the people from all over the kingdom of Judah were gathered together in Jerusalem. *“Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord’s house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word”* (v2).

Verse 3 of the sermon indicated that the predicted judgment upon Judah was *conditional*. If the people repented, then God would relent and Jerusalem would be spared. *“Perhaps 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”* (v3).

However, if they refused to repent and turn from their evil ways, and if they wouldn’t turn to the Lord, the city of God’s Temple would “become like Shiloh.” Shiloh was the town where the Tabernacle was located during the days of King Saul. It was from Shiloh that the Ark of the Covenant was taken into battle and captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4). It

appears that the Philistines destroyed Shiloh at that time, and archaeological evidence supports the biblical record, showing that Shiloh was destroyed between 1050 BC and 1100 BC.

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers are responsible to present the *whole* content of God's message.

Look again at God's command to Jeremiah in verse 2: *"Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word."* Notice that Jeremiah was to speak **all the words** of the Lord. Not one word was to be omitted!

There was good news and bad news in his message. The good news was that if the people would turn to the Lord in obedience, the Lord would turn His judgment away: *"Perhaps 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"* (v3).

But the bad news was that if the people continued on in their sinful ways, then the Lord would allow the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah to be destroyed. The beautiful Temple, that was built by King Solomon and had stood for more than 300 years, would be demolished.

The application of this doctrinal point for believers today is obvious. We must present the **whole** content of God's message, including the bad news as well as the good news. The good news is that God loves people, and in Christ He has provided a way of salvation for everyone, because Jesus died for the sins of the world. All a person has to do is believe and put his or her trust in Jesus. John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."*

The bad news is that if people reject the love of God and His gift of salvation, then God must judge this unbelief and rejection of the truth. In John 3:36 Jesus said, *"He who believes on the Son has everlasting life and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* We must present both sides of this truth.

Believers are responsible to present the **entire** content of God's message.

2. Believers are subject to various reactions to the presentation of God's message.

Jeremiah 26:8-19 - *"Now it happened, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, 'You will surely die! ⁹ Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without an inhabitant'?"*

And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. ¹⁰ When the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the Lord and sat down in the entry of the New Gate of the Lord's house. ¹¹ And 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."

¹² Then Jeremiah spoke to all the princes and all the people, saying: "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city with all the words that you have heard. ¹³ Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; then the Lord will relent concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you.

¹⁴ As for me, here I am, in your hand; do with me as seems good and proper to you. ¹⁵ But know for certain that if you put me to death, you will surely bring innocent blood on yourselves, on this city, and on its inhabitants; for truly the Lord has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing."

¹⁶ So the princes and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve to die, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God." ¹⁷ Then certain of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying: ¹⁸ "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest.'" ¹⁹ Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and seek the Lord's favor? And the Lord relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves."

In these verses, we see a variety of reactions to Jeremiah's presentation of God's message - and we will find that this is still true today. Verses 8-11 described the reaction of the self-righteous religious community. They hated to hear the truth, so they wanted to get rid of Jeremiah - even if it meant putting him to death! They didn't want to hear that God was about to judge them and their corrupt system of Temple worship. The false prophets, the corrupt priests, and the self-righteous religious people tried to get the officials of Jerusalem to sentence Jeremiah to death. It sounds a lot like what happened many years later at the unjust trial of our Lord, doesn't it? (See John 11:45-53.)

In verses 12-15, Jeremiah defended himself by stating that he was innocent of any crime. All he had done was to present the people with a way to escape God's judgment. They could kill him if they wanted, but if they did they would be shedding innocent blood.

In verses 16-19 revealed another reaction to Jeremiah's message. It could be called the "cooler heads prevail" reaction. The city officials and some of the elders said that Jeremiah should not die. After all, in the days of King Hezekiah the prophet Micah prophesied the same message, and Micah was not put to death. Furthermore, the Lord saved Israel at that time (about 100 years earlier), when He delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrian threat through a great miracle. This event would have been well known and remembered by everyone. So Jeremiah's life was spared at this time.

We, too, can expect varying reactions when we speak God's message. Some people hate the message and the messenger so much that they would actually not be opposed to putting the messenger to death! We see this even today

in some countries. But cooler heads sometimes prevail, and even if they won't accept the message and become believers, at least they don't try to kill the messenger. Believers are subject to various reactions when they present God's message.

Practical Application

We must leave the sad fallout in the hands of God.

Jeremiah 26:20-24 - *"Now there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the Lord, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath Jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah. ²¹ And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid and fled, and went to Egypt. ²² Then Jehoiakim the king sent men to Egypt: Elnathan the son of Achbor, and other men who went with him to Egypt. ²³ And they brought Urijah from Egypt and brought him to Jehoiakim the king, who killed him with the sword and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. ²⁴ Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death."*

In these verses we see another reaction to Jeremiah's message from God. King Jehoiakim was very angry when he couldn't get his hands on Jeremiah, so he tracked down Urijah, another good prophet of God, and put him to death.

How do you think Jeremiah felt at this point? How did he feel when he realized that because his life was spared, Jehoiakim vented his wrath by killing another good prophet? This terrible situation must have been very hard for Jeremiah to take. Even though he had done the right thing by doing what God called him to do, he might easily have blamed himself for the sad fallout of his preaching of God's message.

We will find the same is true today. There may be sad fallout, even when we're doing what's right, and doing what the Lord has called us to do. Folks can get hurt. Those who don't like our message may take out their anger and frustration on others. When that happens, it's hard not to blame ourselves.

So what do we do? ***We must press on, continuing to obey the Lord!*** If we're doing what God has called us to do, we can trust Him - and leave any sad fallout in the hands of God.