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Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah

Let's Wise Up to the Enemy's
Tactics

April 25, 2021

Sermon Text: Jeremiah 26

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 8

2Ki 23:28-37 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? (29) In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him. (30) And his servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb.

And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and

anointed him, and made him king in his father's place. (31) Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. (32) And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. (33) And Pharaoh Neco put him in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and laid on the land a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

(34) And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away, and he came to Egypt and died there. (35) And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land to give the money according to the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, from everyone according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Neco.

(36) Jehoiakim was twenty-five years

old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

(37) And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

As we come to this 26th chapter of Jeremiah, we come to evil days in Judah. The godly king Josiah had been killed in battle with the Egyptians and two of his sons came to the throne. The first for only 3 months until Pharaoh removed him and placed his brother, Jehoiakim, on the throne instead. Jehoiakim was also a wicked man. NOTE: Godly men and women can arise from ungodly, evil parents. And wicked, ungodly men and women can arise from godly parents.

Now, in these evil days, the Lord gives Jeremiah this command:

Jer 26:1-6 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD: (2) “Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all

the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. (3) It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds. (4) You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, (5) and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, (6) then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.’”

Stand in the court of the Lord's house. Apparently this was a time of one of the Jewish festivals because people from all the cities had come to Jerusalem to worship.

Speak all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word! Jeremiah was, once again, called to speak to a hostile nation. And in particular, he was to preach this sermon at the epicenter of hostility, *the Temple*. The nation's worship was putrid to the Lord, mixed as it was with their evil sins and idolatries from which they had habitually refused to repent.

The sermon was not an ear-tickler – its words would instead burn their ears. And yet it was a word of the Lord’s patience and kindness in that He was giving them even further warnings of impending judgment, and a promise to them that He would protect and bless them if they turned from their evil. NOTE: a truly biblical “hell-fire and brimstone” sermon, the doctrine of hell preached, is in fact a kindness from the Lord given to the sinner.

1Pe 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Jer 25:29 For behold, I begin to work disaster at the city that is called by my name, and shall you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the LORD of hosts.’

Christ is coming, and when He comes He will judge the nations. Every race, every individual, every people. But as has always been His pattern, so it will be then – *He begins judgment with those who claim to be His household,*

His people, His church. Jerusalem is first on the list in Jeremiah 25. *Judgment begins at the household of God.* That is what you have happening here. God sends Jeremiah to the Temple, to the people God has made a covenant with.

On the day when Christ comes –

Mat 7:22-23 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ (23) And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

Christ came first to Israel. The Apostles were commanded to begin preaching in Jerusalem, then Judea, then to the uttermost parts of the earth. Paul went to the Jews but when they rejected the gospel, he went to the gentiles. It is an obvious and clear pattern that the Lord follows.

Here then He sends His prophet to the Temple to preach. To the Jews from all Judah. He is *winnowing* His church. Jeremiah was commanded in chapter 25

to preach to the nations, but at the top of the list was Jerusalem first.

What are the obvious applications for us today?

- *Do not omit a word!* People in the visible church who profess to know Christ, need to hear all that the Word of God says. We must never assume that everyone who is a church member or who says they are a Christian – *is*.
- God has always been at work, and is still doing it today, to purify His church, to enter into a kind of “judgment” with those who claim His name. His Word is like a hammer and fire – it searches out the very inner intentions of the heart and it exposes truth or falsehood.
- In the visible church, therefore, where God’s Word is being preached, with no omission of any part that the sinner might find “offensive,” we should expect to see a very similar response to what Jeremiah experienced, or Jesus, or Paul.

And what was that response?

You Seek to Murder Me

Jer 26:7-9 **The priests and the prophets** and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. (8) And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, **then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall 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 inhabitant’?’” And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

The priests and the prophets. These were, of course, not true prophets sent by the Lord (see Jer 23), but false, evil prophets making up their own “word of God.” But what we want to note here is that at the center and lead of this murderous response to God’s Word, are, *the priests and the prophets*. The clergy in other words. The religious leaders. Jeremiah was preaching on their “turf” and they hated him for it and stirred up a mob. They were of their father the devil. Look again:

Jer 26:10-11 When the officials of

Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the LORD and **took their seat** in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD. (11) Then **the priests and the prophets** said to the officials and to all the people, **“This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.”**

Court is in session, but it is anything but a fair trial. A mob is there, as there would be centuries later when Christ was tried in that same city.

Look again though at the leaders of this evil – the *priests and the prophets*. And this brings us to the primary doctrine we want to consider this morning:

One of Satan’s favorite tactics which he has habitually used from the beginning of time is the introduction into the visible church of his wolves in sheep’s clothing – specifically in the clothing of the clergy. Counterfeit preachers, pastors, church leaders, a false priesthood and so on.

Therefore, we are required to use God’s wisdom and not be foolish or naïve. We must never assume that these things happened in “Bible times” but could

never happen today or in our churches. *In fact we must expect this very thing to be happening now.*

These wicked, false priests and prophets:

- Exalt themselves
- Fleece the flock for personal gain
- Preach a false gospel
- Hate, with a murderous hatred, Christ’s true servants
- Create false position for themselves above others, setting themselves up as Christ’s vicars on earth, with the power to offer or withhold entrance into heaven

Now, of course the obvious case of all this is seen in the Roman Catholic popery and priesthood. Rome has hated Christ’s true servants from the beginning and like these priests and prophets in Jeremiah’s day, call out “death for them.”

But that is all relatively easy to spot. Far more subtle and devious is this whole business which we find in evangelical and Protestant churches today. George Whitefield experienced it you recall at the hands of the Church of England priesthood. And I can tell you

confidently that people of this very same ilk, of this very same devilish spirit, fill many leadership positions in evangelical churches today.

And it is to this fact that we all must be wise.

Let's think this through. I know that it is not a pleasant thought that the preacher or well-known "Christian" author or famous theologian *may in fact be a servant of the enemy*. But we are very foolish if we remain willfully blind to these truths which the Bible clearly and repeatedly shows us, just because we don't want some "unpleasantness" in our thoughts!

I remember once many years ago a family came to our church from a Lutheran background. During a Bible study one evening I was teaching on the false gospel that Rome teaches and I said that the Popes of Rome have always been antichrist, false, counterfeit wolves in sheep's clothing. The mother got incensed and said "you cannot say that! Of course the Pope is a man of God!" As a Lutheran, which of course she really wasn't, she surely should never have had any problem with what I said! But she did not want

to think about that unpleasant possibility.

If you were to take a Bible and cut out all verses that present "unpleasant" facts, you would not have much left.

And yet that is the "Bible" so many supposed Christians adhere to today.

Heb 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

So think carefully on this:

One of Satan's favorite tactics which he has habitually used from the beginning of time is the introduction into the visible church of his wolves in sheep's clothing – specifically in the clothing of the clergy. Counterfeit preachers, pastors, church leaders, a false priesthood and so on.

- Who is it that we see here calling for Jeremiah's death?
- Who led the mob in putting Stephen to death?

- Who were the evil people that Paul had to warn the Galatians about?
- Who were the leading enemies of the Lord Jesus?
- Who were the vicious wolves Paul warned the Ephesians about?
- Who were the people that the Lord Jesus preached so many scathing words about – “Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!”
- What city was it that put to death the prophets God sent to them over and over? Jerusalem – the mecca of the covenant people of God!

Why then should we expect that it be any different today?

An important Observation

Think about God’s prophets and apostles. What kind of people were they? I can tell you, at least in part:

In contrast to the ‘established’ clergy like the scribes and Pharisees, God’s prophets were not part of the established religious order. If they were a priest, like Jeremiah, they were ostracized by the clergy. They did not

don religious, showy garb like the Pharisees, but were more often like John the Baptist dressed in unassuming form. They were not popular. They were not sought after by their fellows, and promoted to high office in the denomination. And ultimately most of them were put to death by the established clergy.

Gal 2:6 And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

Not only is it not paranoia or some kind of sinful judgmental spirit to be very, very cautious about “the clergy,” *it is wisdom.*

Jeremiah’s Defense and God’s Protection of His Prophet

Jer 26:12-15 Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard.

(13) Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD

will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you.

(14) But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. (15) Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.”

We see here the confidence that the Lord gives to all of His people who obey Him and speak for Him. “Go ahead, but know for certain that you will be guilty before God.”

And the result –

Jer 26:16-24 Then the officials and all the people said **to the priests and the prophets**, “This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.” (17) And certain of the elders of the land arose and spoke to all the assembled people, saying, (18) “Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Zion shall be plowed

as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’ (19) Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves.” (20) There was another man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah the son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against this city and against this land in words like those of Jeremiah. (21) And when King Jehoiakim, with all his warriors and all the officials, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death. But when Uriah heard of it, he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt. (22) Then King Jehoiakim sent to Egypt certain men, Elnathan the son of Achbor and others with him, (23) and they took Uriah from Egypt and brought him to King Jehoiakim, who struck him down with the sword and dumped his dead body into the burial place of the common people. (24) But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah so that he was not given over to the people to be put to death.

It is amazing, but there actually were some people there who had some wisdom and at least a degree of the fear of the Lord. They stop and think, just as we need to. *They did not just blindly do what the clergy was telling them to do. They began to think about Scripture. Specifically, two cases:*

- The prophet Micah and king Hezekiah (godly king)
- The prophet Uriah and king Jehoiakim (ungodly king)

BOTH Micah (see Micah 3:5ff) and Uriah announced God's judgment upon Jerusalem for their sin. In the first case, godly King Hezekiah feared the Lord and did not put Micah to death, and the Lord changed his mind and did not bring about the judgment upon Judah.

In the second case, the wicked king Jehoiakim, killed Uriah for prophesying against Jerusalem. What was the result?

2Ki 24:1-4 In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him. (2) And the LORD sent against him bands of the

Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets. (3) Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, (4) and also for the innocent blood that he had shed. For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD would not pardon.

Specifically (Jer 26:24) a good man is named – Ahikam – who stood with Jeremiah to rescue him from the evil plots of the priests and prophets.

Think, think, think about these things. God's prophet, God's true servant, was protected from the wicked, murderous plans of the religious clergy, by a few godly people who had sense and courage enough to stand against those priests and prophets and consider instead the Scripture.

There were few of those people then. It seems there are even fewer today. The murderous mob usually has a religion of "follow the leader." What kind of person are you?