

## The Power of the Word (Jeremiah 23:23–40)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (6/26/2020)

**Text:** *“Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”* (Jeremiah 23:29).

### Introduction

1. Jeremiah’s call (1:5–10)
  - a. Jeremiah’s *commission*—*“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.”*
  - b. Jeremiah’s *authority*—*“See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms.”*
  - c. Jeremiah’s *task*—*“To pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant”*
  - d. Jeremiah’s *weapon*—God’s words in the prophet’s mouth, the awful power to both destroy and to create, both a negative work and a positive work.
2. The major question: What was Jeremiah, via the Word of Yahweh, to destroy and build?
  - a. Something must be first removed for something new and better to replace it. In this case, the old covenant community was to be replaced by a new covenant community in Christ (Jer. 31:31–34). What follows the call and commission of the prophet is a clarification.
  - b. Divine determination to empower the Word

Jeremiah is given a vision of an almond branch and asked about what he sees. The Lord then explained, *“You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it”* (1:12).
  - c. Divine determination to make the Word inexorable (unstoppable)

A boiling pot with steam being fanned or blown by the wind is viewed that the Lord interprets as symbolizing judgment coming from the north (1:16).

The proposition of the message: The Word of God had to destroy the rebellious OC kingdom for the creation a righteous NC kingdom in Christ. To create a righteous NC kingdom, people must be transformed by the Word and Spirit. The indicator of this transformation is that they *“know the Lord”* so intimately that they live out whole-hearted and loving covenant obedience as true children of God.

### I. Covenant-Breakers

1. Why did the OC people forsake the covenant? (Jer. 4:22).
  - a. They did not know their covenant Lord, Yahweh. Here is the bottom line: *“Is not this to know me?”* (Jer. 22:16, 17; 9:24). The basic characteristic of NC people is that they *know* Him and, thus, respond to Him with enthusiastic and loving attention. Do you? Here is a glorious NC promise (Jer. 31:34).
  - b. Because of their foolish and corrupt minds, they would not *hear* Him (Jer. 17:23; 22:21; 11:3; 12:17).
  - c. They would not hear Him because, in their foolish minds, they corrupted themselves (Jer. 17:9; 8:9).
2. Why did they not listen, even ignoring the glorious history of God in their midst?

- a. They did not have ears to hear and refused to hear His Word (Jer. 5:21; 11:10).
  - b. They would not repent of their unfaithfulness (Jer. 3:10).
3. Still, the Lord, through the word of His prophet, pled for His faithless covenant nation to return to Him (Jer. 3:22, 23). The covenant-breakers were fully responsible for their attitudes and actions (Jer. 4:18; 16:21).

## II. A Gracious Remnant

Jeremiah is used as a model of a redeemed remnant to replace the rebellious OC kingdom.

- 1. The evidence of grace
  - a. His tender-hearted trust in the divine covenant Lord, Yahweh (Jer. 17:14)
  - b. His confidence in the divine Word to accomplish the divine purpose (Jer. 17:15)
  - c. His faithfulness in obedience to the divine purpose (Jer. 17:16).
- 2. Jeremiah's hope in Yahweh's kingdom (Jer. 16:19–21)
- 3. The power of the Word is inexorably transformative (Jer. 23:29).
  - a. God declared the Word's inexorable power in the mouth of His prophet (Jer. 5:14).
  - b. The power of His Word required a gracious work in His prophet (Jer. 20:9, 11).

## God's Word to His Church

To repeat our proposition: NC people will be so transformed through the Word that they will *know the Lord*. They will naturally live out covenant obedience because they are true children of their Heavenly Father (James 1:27). The power of this transformational work of the Word of God can be seen in the example of Paul in Philippians 3:7–11.

- 1. Paul forsook his former life in the OC community and regarded all his achievements as loss and rubbish because Christ invaded his life on the Damascus Road (Phil. 3:12).
- 2. Now Paul's only desire was "*the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord*." The zeal and dedication that characterized his previous life as a Jew under the OC would now characterize his new life as a NC Christ-follower. The objective before him was to *gain* Christ with the zeal that characterized his confidence in the flesh to pursue "*whatever gain*" he now counted loss.
- 3. *Knowing* Christ was the first step to "*gain Christ*," not seeking His grace and favor, as is often taught, but *Christ*. What he had *gained* (circumcised, Israelite by birth, Benjamite, Pharisee, persecutor, and righteous law-keeper) he now regarded as loss in order to gain Christ. He testified, "*For me to live is Christ*" (Phil. 1:21). He wanted Christ Himself through fully knowing Him in resurrection power—transforming power to change his life and service in order to bring greater glorify to God as Christ lived out His life in him. He testified, "*For me to live is Christ*" (Phil. 1:21).
- 4. This is what He meant when He said, "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27). Jeremiah, as one of the redeemed OC remnant, experienced the power of God as a fire in him that could not be shut in. He was compelled to preach the Word.
- 5. As the Word transformed Jeremiah and Paul, it will transform you if you are truly His (Jer. 15:16, 17).