**Jeremiah 23 (Lesson 13a)**

**I. Text Of Chapter 23 – Good & Evil Shepherds (5 min. to read)**

A. Regathering Israel & The Righteous Branch Of David To Come (23:1-8)

1. The Evil Shepherds (vv. 1-4; cf. 2:8; 10:21; Ezek. 34)

a. They did not visit the people of God; God will visit them w/ pain.

b. When they come out of exile at the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, God will provide them with capable and loving shepherds (e.g. Joshua, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, Ezra, etc.).

2. The Good Shepherd To Come (vv. 5-8; cf. 16:14f; 33:15f; Jn. 10) – *“Behold, the time is coming”* is used 16x to introduce a message of hope.

a. Descendant of David (cf. 2Sam. 7:12-14; Lk. 1:31-33)

b. Righteous Branch (cf. Zech. 3:8; 6:12f; Rom. 1:2-5)

c. King (cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:13f; Eph. 1:20-23; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 30-36; Jn. 18:36-38; Mk. 9:1; Col. 1:13; Rev. 17:14)

d. Ideal Ruler (cf. 2Sam. 8:15; Rom. 3:23-26; 5:17-21)

e. “The Lord Our Righteousness” (cf. 33:16; Is. 11; 45:24; 2Cor. 5:21); this is a play on the name of Zedekiah; reunification in v. 8

B. Denunciation Of The False Prophets (23:9-40) – Clearly builds on the condemnation of the royal, yet unrighteous, house of David in chapter 22.

1. They Enable Evil (vv. 9-15)

a. Jeremiah is whirling b/c of the situation. These guys were terrible! (cf. 2Kgs. 21:5; Ezek. 8:6-18)

b. The prophets and the priests loved sin & would fall...hard. It would be as if they had all drunken horrific poison.

c. Rather than set the example and preach repentance, they preached false security in all kinds of ungodly activity, outdoing Samaria.

2. They Speak From Own Evil Hearts (vv. 16-22; cf. 10:23; 17:9; Dt. 13:1-3; Am. 3:7; Mt. 15:13-15; 2Ti. 4:2-4; Jude 16) vv. 19f repeated in 30:23f.

3. They Are Opposed By God (vv. 23-32; cf. Ps. 139:7-12; Ezek. 13:17-19)

a. God’s omnipresence has implications, whichever side we are on.

b. *“Their fanciful visions distract attention from the covenantal morality and focus it instead on the immoral Baal rites. Like straw their idle dreams lack sustenance, whereas the prophetic word, like wheat, nourishes its recipients. While the false prophets preface their remarks with a formula which purports to indicate divine inspiration, they use words spoken by other inspired individuals which do not apply to the present situation (30,31).”* (Harrison, “Jeremiah & Lamentations, *TNTC,* 122)

c. v. 28 – *“The thought seems to be: Let the man who has a dream tell his dream if he must. But he must not confuse his dream with revelation from Jehovah. He must tell the people what it is—not the word of Jehovah, but only a dream; and therefore worthless—as chaff to wheat when compared with the word of Jehovah.”* (Mott, 125)

4. They Have Become The Burden (vv. 33-40; cf. Gal. 6:7) – burden puns here

a. Their perversion of revealing the Word of God (i.e. “burdens” in a prophetic specific sense?; e.g. Is. 13:1; 15:1; 17:1) has resulted in them being a burden to the people.

**II. Thought Questions For Chapter 23**

A. What covenant had God made with David’s house? (2Sam. 7) What aspect(s) of the covenant come into play here in vv. 1-8? Where else is Branch used?

B. What sorts of behaviors did the false prophets of Judah demonstrate? (vv. 9-15)

C. What three points are made concerning God’s omniscience? (vv. 23f)

D. What is God’s Word likened unto? (v. 29) What’s the point of each image?

**III. Applications For Chapter 23**

A. vv. 21, 25, 30—Don’t simply take the word of someone who claims to speak in the name of the Lord. Personal investigation (Acts 17:11; 1Jn. 4:1) is so crucial because there are many who substitute falsehood for the truth (2Pet. 2:1-3; Acts 20:29f; Gal. 1:6-8; 2Cor. 11:14f; 2Thess. 2:10-12; Rev. 22:18f).

B. vv. 23f—The Lord is near to all. This is a blessing for the righteous (Acts 18:9f; Heb. 13:5f); it is a cause of fear for the unrighteous (Heb. 4:13; 2Tim. 2:19).

**Jeremiah 24 (Lesson 13b)**

**I. Text Of Chapter 24 – Vision of the Figs (1.5-2 min. to read)**

A. Historical Context & Vision (24:1-3)

1. Time: Post-deportation of Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. (cf. 2Kgs. 24:8-17; Ezek. 1:1f); pre-Jerusalem destruction of Zedekiah in 586 B.C.

2. Early-ripening figs, maturing in June, were viewed as a delicacy (Is. 28:4; Hos. 9:10).

3. Those who seek the Lord wholeheartedly will find Him (cf. Deut. 4:29ff; Ps. 119:10; Matt. 7:7).

B. Interpretation: The Good Figs (24:4-7; cf. Ezek. 11:14-21)

1. Represents those taken into captivity.

2. God has promised not to make a full end of Judah (cf. 4:27; 5:10, 18; 30:11; 46:28). Captivity was rough, but the 70 year exile would end.

3. Those taken into captivity were taken because they were evil, but the effect of deportation and servitude to Babylon would refine their attitude and actions (cf. 29:10, 13).

C. Interpretation: The Bad Figs (24:8-10; cf. taunt in Hab. 2:6-17)

1. Represents those who remained in Jerusalem during Zedekiah’s reign. They chose impenitence and rebellion and as such perished by sword, famine, and pestilence. Some die in Egypt (cf. Jer. 42-44).

2. *“The final accomplishment of the promise in verse 10 occurred when the Romans devastated Judea, as Christ also predicted (cf. Mt. 23:38).”* (Harrison, *TNTC,* 124)

**II. Thought Questions For Chapter 24**

A. Who do the good figs represent? What other metaphors are used for such people?

B. What caveat is placed upon the return of the good figs? (cf. 29:10-14)

C. What other prophet serves to admonish the good figs while they are in captivity?

D. Who do the bad figs represent? What other metaphors are used for such people?

**III. Applications For Chapter 24**

A. Bear good fruit for God and demonstrate your relationship with Jesus.

B. Things aren’t always as they seem. God can take people in terrible circumstances and accomplish great things through them. Hope may be found unexpectedly.