

OCTOBER 14

Jeremiah 23:21-25:38

Jeremiah 23: 21-40

Vs. 21-32 God isn't finished with the false prophets. It is interesting to be reading this and then in 2 Thessalonians, to see that there will be lying signs and wonders.

Notice in this section how often you find *declares the Lord*.

As you read this, what is God really upset about? Along with that thought, there are two questions (vs.23 and 29) that help show the structure of this rebuke to the prophets.

Vs. 21-22 The goal of true prophecy was that the people should have turned from their ways to the Lord.

V. 25 During these days of threat, this must have been like a circus of entertainment, seeing false prophets run into the market place yelling, "*I have dreamed, I have dreamed.*" These guys only prophesied good news.

V. 29 God's Word does bring comfort, but in this world at this time, it is more often like this.

Vs. 33-40 Now God is going after those who were ridiculing Jeremiah for bringing bad news, not realizing that they were really ridiculing God. I guess they would go up to Jeremiah and say, "*What is the **BURDEN** of the Lord?*" I'm sure once this hit the street it was great fun and there were hundreds of variations. And let's face it, every time Jeremiah opened his mouth there was some clump of bad news that fell out. But, of course, the problem was that it was really God speaking. Poor Jeremiah. And it was unfortunate for the people that God pays such close attention to the words people use. *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak.* (Matt. 12:36)

Jeremiah 24

Vs. 1-3 This chapter is one vision. When Nebuchadnezzar took these people, he also took Ezekiel. The two baskets of figs represent the people taken into exile and the people left in Jerusalem.

Vs. 4-7 The *good figs*. Although this was judgment for some people like the guy who beat up Jeremiah and for Jehoiachin, going into exile was actually a blessing for some people. They would be saved. And there was more blessing awaiting these people that God had prepared before Jeremiah had said these words. Daniel, chapters 1-3, had already taken place before this deportation. Four godly young Jewish men, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, had already become upper echelon leaders in Nebuchadnezzar's government; and Daniel was his chief advisor. Neb had already been hit with the fear of God, literally; and the Jews were a protected people in his empire, exempt from worshipping anything but Yahweh. God is pretty cool.

V. 7 This still hasn't happened, but it probably will during the Tribulation and especially in the Millennium.

Vs. 8-10 The people who were unfortunate enough to remain with Zedekiah were *the bad figs*. Now, since Jeremiah and some other godly people were there, there were some people who would be saved, but very, very few. In v. 8 it mentions those dwelling *in the land of Egypt*. Some people had already gone to Egypt for refuge; and still to come, the survivors of Jerusalem would disobey the Lord and head down to Egypt, only to have Nebuchadnezzar's army nipping at their heels.

Jeremiah 25

Vs. 1-2 Notice that this is going back in time. Chapter 24 was after the death of Jehoiakim, and this chapter is in the 4th year of Jehoiakim (who reigned about 11 years). Four years after Jehoiakim was made king by Pharaoh Neco, Nebuchadnezzar showed up. Neb took some of the stuff from the temple to show that his god was bigger than God, and then took about 1-3000 people, including many of the younger men, to be trained in his service. Among these people were four teens: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Dan. 1:6).

I'm thinking that Jeremiah spoke these words before Nebuchadnezzar showed up, because the 70 years wouldn't begin until Daniel and the others were taken to Babylon.

Vs. 3-14 Jehoiakim had reigned only four years, but was already known to be an evil king and a donkey of a man. Jeremiah was a veteran prophet and God had shown great kindness through Josiah. Now in these few short years, the people had not remembered Josiah or listened to Jeremiah. The people had fully embraced the sexuality of Baal worship and everything else they could get their hands on, to worship.

The reason for the *seventy years* is stated in 2 Chronicles 36:21, because they had never trusted God enough to give the land its Sabbaths. In *seventy years*, Daniel would be reading these chapters and praying for the return of the people in spite of the lions roaring in the background. It is because of Daniel 6 that the people get sent back and that they are saved in the Persian Empire from having to worship the Persian gods. What Daniel was praying in chapter 6 is actually found in Daniel 9.

Vs. 15-29 This is the vision of Jeremiah feeding the nations the wine of God's wrath. There is an "end times" feel to this. Figuratively speaking, Jeremiah's eyes had "seen the glory of the coming of the Lord who was tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath were stored." Now God put it in a glass, and Jeremiah was serving it to the nations.

Vs. 30-33 This is God's wrath against the nations. There is a certain end-times feel to this as well.

Vs. 34-38 Again, God is declaring the *shepherds* (kings, priests, leaders) responsible and they will be punished.

Remember in all of this negativity, that God is using Israel to show mankind, us included, how desperate the sin within us is. Given the opportunity, we would all spit in His face and irrationally hate Him.

Reading this about the shepherds reminded me of the song "He Leadeth Me." I used to sing this all the time and I still love it. We are all meant to lead others as makers of disciples - guiding, encouraging, entrusting, and strengthening others to follow Christ. The real training for this is not a seminar or a seminary, but that we ourselves are led by Christ and His Spirit, reading His Word and working in the harvest.

2 Thessalonians 2

Some of the teaching we get here, thanks to this conflict, we find nowhere else in the Bible. That is very interesting and profound if you think about it. Poor Paul had to lose some sleep and have some agitation, but we get a treat. Funny how God keeps working like that.

Vs. 1-2 This was sort of like the old joke (for those who believe in the pre-trib rapture) that the rapture came and you got left behind. But here, no one was laughing. It was being said that *the day of the Lord* had already begun. The Thessalonians were shaken, because apparently what Paul had taught them hadn't happened to them. They were expecting something that didn't happen. Apparently too, they had bad preaching going on, possibly false prophecy, and a false letter from Paul.

As has happened in all centuries since this was written, people see their circumstances as being the fulfillment of the day of the Lord. The present Roman persecution was being explained as being that day.

Vs. 3-12 Paul apparently gave them some very thorough teaching about the last days. Why do you think he taught this to new believers, particularly to these new believers? So, according to Paul, what has to have happened so that they would have known it was really, really the day of the Lord?

It seems to me that because of the persecution the Thessalonians were experiencing, Paul needed to give them hope and to show them God's plan.

V. 3 The *rebellion* is "apostasy," a departure from the faith. You can also find this in Matthew 24:10, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 3:1 and 2 Timothy 4:4. Apparently it will be a world event coming up to the day. Times of stress will come and people will depart or adopt a "Christianity" that is nothing like Jesus. If you read Matthew 24:9 you will see that this rebellion will happen shortly after the Tribulation begins.

Vs. 6-7 The restrainer is removed. Obviously it is not the Holy Spirit Himself. People will be saved during the Tribulation, though perhaps very few compared to the 7 billion plus population. My opinion is that the restrainer is the influence of the Holy Spirit through the church. The church is taken at the beginning of the day of the Lord. Apparently the Thessalonians had been taught this and knew "who" or "what" the restrainer was. If you go back to 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and realize that the wrath to come is the day of the Lord, all seven years of it, then you see that the church is to be excluded *from* that wrath. It is the time of Jacob's trouble, where Israel, not the church, will be tested and proven. With the church gone, the physical influence of the Holy Spirit will be removed from millions of towns, cities, offices, and places of decision. I think Israel will see this and be struck to the heart with "jealousy" and realize the truth of Christ. To see the interrelationship of the church and Israel and belief, read Romans 11, and particularly vs. 30-31, *Just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.*

V. 8 The revealing of the *lawless one* (man of sin). The antichrist will become known in making a peace agreement with Israel, but particularly in breaking that agreement after three and a half years, standing in the temple and declaring himself to be god.

Vs. 9-12 These will be incredible, lying signs and wonders, perhaps visible to the entire world via CNN.

Vs. 13-17 Based on what Paul had just said, it was impossible that the day of the Lord had come. They were chosen to give glory to Christ. They were to be established and comforted by this teaching and to keep witnessing for Christ, extending love and mercy in the harvest.

Looking at the teaching Paul gave these new Christians, they expected to be persecuted, and their hope in this dying world was Christ's return for them at some point in this harvest. Paul's/the Spirit's warnings about people falling away, holding a form of religion, but denying the power of it, wasn't hype. The only way to prove we are followers is to follow in the harvest, bearing our cross each day, willing to die for Christ. I wonder if it is possible that we have a brand of Christianity and church that would not endure if we were really subjected to helplessness, pain and persecution.

Psalm 84

If you could find that one place where there is perfect peace and comfort, where you could be accepted and at rest, wouldn't you want to visit it regularly? It isn't really a place, He's a person.

But really, someday that person will be in a place we can get to Him, and I'll be happy to be there. For now, we seek Him in secret.

Vs. 1-4 This is the blessing of those whose desire is for the presence of the Lord.

Vs. 5-7 This is the blessing of those whose strength is in the Lord.

Vs. 8-12 This is the blessing of those whose trust and hope are in the Lord

Proverbs 25:15

So what does this say to the disciple in the harvest, bearing fruit with *patience*?