

When Jesus Comes • Jeremiah 23:1-8

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *The Preacher*

1. It's been said that the true function of a *preacher* is to afflict the comfortable and to comfort the afflicted.
2. I suppose there's truth in that
3. And it is certainly what we see in the life and preaching of the prophet Jeremiah

B. *Jeremiah's Time*

1. He lived in a time that spanned the last years of the nation of Judah
2. His ministry began when on the surface, things seemed to be going well for the nation
 - a. there was peace and prosperity
 - b. the people lived well
3. But the ease and luxury of the times could not mask the underlying decay
4. They may have lived well, but they did not live nobly!
 - a. the court system had become corrupt
 - b. the innocent were being taken advantage of
 - c. violence ruled the streets
 - d. the rulers of the people used their position for nothing more than their own enrichment, often on the backs of the weak and impoverished
5. But the crowning tragedy of the age was their wholesale rejection of God and embracing of false gods
 - a. the temple had been turned into a shrine for idols to Baal and Asherah
 - b. the Valley of Hinnom, just outside Jerusalem's walls held altars to Molech,
 - c. where parents would take their infant children and offer them as burnt offerings
6. Jeremiah had the difficult task of telling the people that their days were numbered
 - a. their rebellion and sin had grown so gross,
 - b. they had crossed a line of no return
 - c. judgment was coming in the form of the armies of Babylon
 - d. who would come and destroy their nation, the mighty city of Jerusalem, and would deport the people out of the land
7. His was indeed a message of affliction to the comfortable.
8. But he also had a message of comfort for those who were afflicted by the sin and idolatry around them.
9. You see, in the midst of a generation that had gone wholesale after perversion and sin, there were those who remained loyal to God
 - a. they were the minority, but they held fast
 - b. and for them, Jeremiah had a message of restoration and hope . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2

1 “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the LORD.

2 Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the LORD.

1. By *shepherds*, Jeremiah means *all* the leaders of the people
 - a. the king, the court officials whose policies governed daily life
 - b. the priests, the elders
2. These men and been charged with the task of leading the nation, which was the people and flock of God.
3. They were shepherds – and as such, their task was three-fold; to lead, feed, and protect the flock.
4. But they had done the very opposite
 - a. instead of leading, they had scattered the flock
 - b. instead of feeding, they had fed on the flock
 - c. and instead of protecting, they had destroyed the flock of God
5. Because of their inattention to the needs of the people, God would now attend to them!
6. This reveals an important truth – God holds leaders accountable for how they lead!
7. In Romans 13, the Apostle Paul tells us that God is the One who has established the various levels of authority in this world, and that it’s the duty of people to submit to that authority.
8. Here we are shown that those *in* authority will have to give account, they will answer for *how* they use that authority.
 - a. the mayors and city councils of Oxnard, Ventura, Camarillo and the rest of the cities around here ultimately have to answer, not to the electorate, but to God, for how they have governed
 - b. the local school boards, our governor and State Senate, the judges who sit on legal benches, all answer to God
 - c. the President and Congress are civil shepherds whose task it is to lead, feed, and protect the flock entrusted to them by God
9. How many of our civil rulers today have a sincere heart to attend to the needs of those they are leading?
 - a. do they have a heart to serve?
 - b. or do they see political office as the means of personal advancement and enrichment?
10. It’s a sobering thing to realize that God establishes the authority of civil government – and that He will hold accountable each and every person who is granted that authority according to how they use it!

B. Vs. 3-4

3 “But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

- 4 **I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the LORD.**
1. Last Wednesday evening, Dave Hunt said that the study of prophecy is often a difficult and challenging one
 2. The reason for that is because often we find a prophecy which has more than one fulfillment
 - a. some prophecies have an immediate or near fulfillment,
 - b. and then another fulfillment farther out; often times even for the last days
 3. God does this for a reason
 - a. by giving a near or immediate fulfillment, it adds weight to the sureness and reality of the later fulfillment
 - b. by fulfilling the prophecy in part and literally now, it adds confidence that the rest of it will be fulfilled later and just as literally
 4. We see that here
 5. Because of Judah’s rebellion against God, because of the leader’s failure in protecting and leading the nation, the nation would be scattered
 6. This would be the result of God’s judgment: The Babylonians would come and deport them
 7. But after a time, God would gather them and restore them to the land
 8. They would prosper under a new set of leaders whose hearts were right
 9. This was fulfilled just 70 years after the Babylonians conquered them
 - a. the Jews were given permission to return and rebuild their cities
 - b. though only a remnant actually made the journey, Jerusalem was rebuilt
 - c. the temple was restored, and new rulers were raised up
 10. But the prophecy of vs. 3 & 4 goes farther than the return from Babylon
 11. It looks to a later time when an even greater return of Jews will be made
 12. Notice what God says . . .
 - a. He will gather the remnant of His flock out of ALL THE NATIONS where he had driven them.
 - b. this is more than just a return from Babylon; it’s from *all* the nations
 - c. and when they return, they will have shepherds like they hadn’t had since the days of King David
 - d. these shepherds will bring peace and safety, as well as unruffled prosperity
 13. These are all promises that surpass the return from Babylon
 14. They look to the last days when Israel is regathered from all the nations and is living safely in their land
 15. The next verses make that clear . . .

C. Vs. 5-8

- 5 **“Behold, *the* days are coming,” says the LORD, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.**
- 6 **In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this *is* His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**
- 7 **“Therefore, behold, *the* days are coming,” says the LORD, “that they shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land**

of Egypt,'

8 but, 'As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.' And they shall dwell in their own land."

1. The regathering that Jeremiah foretold is one that is even *greater* than the Exodus from Egypt, and the return from Babylon was certainly *not* that!
2. No, this is a gathering from all the nations of the world
3. And there will be an especially large contingent from the north that shall come
4. In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple
 - a. the Jews had proven to be such an implacable and dangerous foe that in an attempt to forestall any more problems with them,
 - b. the Romans ruled that the Jews were barred from the Jerusalem and the surrounding region
 - c. the result was what is called the *Diaspora* – the dispersion of the Jews around the world
 - d. everywhere they went they formed little communities
 - 1) Europe
 - 2) Northern Africa
 - 3) Russia
 - 4) Even Eastward into Asia
5. And there they stayed for the next 1800 years: maintaining their unique identity as Jews
 - a. living in their own segregated communities because of the alternating mild and fierce hatred of the peoples among whom they lived
 - b. for a decade or two they would have relative peace
 - c. but then an intense period of violence would break out and they would be the object of persecution
 - d. the pogroms of Russia, the riots of the European Middle Ages, genocide in Asia, and then the systematic attempt of Hitler during WWII to eradicate the Jew from Europe
 - e. but through it all, they managed to survive
6. At the very end of the 1800's, a new movement began among the Jews called *Zionism*
 - a. it was the result of the growing Jewish awareness that the world would never accept them
 - b. they needed their own land – their own place to live
 - c. so very slowly and quietly, Jews began moving back to Israel
 - d. they bought homes and tracts of lands to build farms and small communes
7. Then, after WWII and the terrible shock of the Holocaust, more and more Jews began to realize the imperative of a national homeland
8. Immigration increased dramatically, though the British attempted to stem the tide
9. Then in May of 1948, Israel declared itself an independent, sovereign nation
10. The reaction of the Arab world was dramatic and immediate; they launched a massive attack against Israel.
11. But when the dust cleared, the Jews had managed to hold their own

12. Another war in 1967 saw the borders and territory of Israel grow yet again
13. Then the surprise attack of 1973 saw a vastly outgunned Israeli army once again expanding its borders.
14. Immigration during the first 4 years, 1948-1951, saw nearly a million Jews moving to Israel!
 - a. after that, for the next 38 years, immigration slowed to an average of about 30,000 a year
 - b. all of that changed dramatically with the collapse of the Soviet Union
 - c. the number of immigrants rose 6-fold!
 - d. for instance, in 1989, there were 24,000 immigrants
 - e., in 1990, there were 200,000 / in 1991 there were over 175,000
 - f. and every year since then there has been an average of 70,000!
 - g. and this only because the nation of Israel cannot take in any more; they have had to put a cap on immigration to manage the large numbers of new citizens
 - 1) it puts tremendous pressure on housing
 - 2) to say nothing of the economy and job market !
15. But what is most interesting is that the vast majority of immigrants since 1990 are from guess where – the *North*, the former Soviet Union countries
16. They make up about 85% of the total number of immigrants
17. Many people in Israel call it the *Russian Exodus!* Brad & CC Jerusalem

18. God says in v. 7
 - 7 **“Therefore, behold, *the days are coming,*” says the LORD, “that they shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’**
 - 8 **but, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ And they shall dwell in their own land.”**
19. “Behold, the days are coming” – It seems those days have come
20. But notice what else will happen in that same time period. V. 5 . . .
 - 5 **“Behold, *the days are coming,*” says the LORD, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.**
 - 6 **In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this *is* His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**
21. In contrast to the wicked, selfish shepherds of Jeremiah’s day, the day will come when God will raise up a branch of David
 - a. as one of David’s descendants, he will rule as King
 - b. and under His reign will come prosperity, justice, and righteousness in all the earth
 - c. in His day – Judah and Israel will be reunited and restored fully to their land, the land God has given them
 - d. and they shall finally dwell there safely.
22. This of course is looking forward to the reign of the Messiah who will come and make all things right

D. When Jesus Comes

1. We know who the Messiah is – Jesus
2. The first time He came, He came to atone for sins
3. But the next time He comes, He comes as the heir to David’s throne
4. He will come to take possession of that which belongs to Him – rule of this earth
5. He will dispossess the kings and rulers of this world who pervert justice
6. He will smash the idols and false gods of this age
7. He will right every wrong, and restore this fallen, sin-cursed creation to the paradise God always intended it to be
8. Later this year, we will elect a new president
 - a. right now the candidates are making their speeches
 - b. laying out their visions for the future
 - c. making their promises about what they will do if they are elected
 - d. from all of them, one will be selected by the American people to lead the greatest and strongest nation on the face of the earth
 - e. who it will be, we don’t as yet know
9. But what we do know is this – Another Ruler has already been elected by God
10. His name is Jesus Christ – and here is His vision of the future – here is what He is promising . . .
 - a. Justice
 - b. Righteousness
 - c. Prosperity
 - d. Peace & Safety
 - e. and an end to the dominion of evil!

III. CONCLUSION

A. His Name

1. I’m not looking forward to the administration of George W. Bush, John McCain, Albert Gore, William Bradley, or even Alan Keyes, Steve Forbes, or Gary Bauer.
2. I’m looking forward to the administration of Jesus Christ, who Jeremiah says will be called, “The Lord Our Righteousness.”
3. This is what he says people will call Jesus in that day – this will be His title
4. Oh friends – this ought to thrill us! It ought to send a chill down every spine
5. Tell me – in general, do people today care about righteousness?
 - a. do right and wrong, good and evil factor into much of their thinking?
 - b. from what you see, does being right with God occupy much of their attention?
 - c. do they spend much time or energy in thinking about morality or the long-term consequences of their actions
6. No, truth be told, righteousness is not too important today
7. But on *that* day – it will be everything!
8. Righteousness will be the precious jewel, the sought after treasure
9. More to be desired than gold or costly gems

10. And it will be found in one place – THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS
11. Righteousness will become visible for every eye to behold in the person of Christ
12. You see – He IS our righteousness
13. Righteousness is what we need to see God
14. And we get righteousness from Christ because He IS righteousness!

B. Got Christ?

1. There's a commercial slogan I'm sure everyone here has seen. Got Milk?
 2. One of those commercials begins with scenes of a particularly obnoxious fellow's day
 - a. he fires a needy employee
 - b. he steals candy from a baby
 - c. he forecloses on some little old lady
 - d. and the whole time he's doing it he's gloating
 - e. he's an evil guy – but as he's crossing a busy street, he gets run down and killed
 - f. when he wakes up, he's in a comfortable room with a plate full of chocolate chip cookies
 - g. he eats one, and thinks, "Hey, if this is hell, it isn't so bad!"
 - h. then he gets up from the recliner and goes to the refrigerator for some milk, which is *filled* with milk cartons
 - i. again he smirks; a lifetime supply, but as he hoists the first container, he realizes it's empty,
 - j. he tries another and another, and realizes they are all empty
 - k. the delight of the cookie has turned to agony
 - l. the commercial ends with two white words against a black background – Got Milk?
 3. One day we will all leave this life and enter the next
 4. The day will come when we will stand before God – Got Christ?
 5. Without Him, the delights of this life will only become agony
- [Explain how we get righteousness – "Without holiness, no one will see the Lord" – Heb. 12:14 • Righteousness comes by faith in Christ – Romans 3:22]