

Fact Sheet for **“The Prophets”**  
**Jeremiah 23:9-40**

Pastor Bob Singer  
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From time to time all of us have had conversations with other Christians who are going through tough times. On some occasions they just need a word of encouragement from a friend. On other occasions they may request our help or counsel. These can be opportunities for some wonderful conversations. Help or advice is given that is truly beneficial, tough times are eased, and the future looks bright again. However these can also be occasions where you will pay a high emotional cost, particularly if the person seeking your advice doesn't like what you say. The people and their leaders in Jerusalem wanted to follow the pagan gods of that culture. They weren't asking for Jeremiah's advice, but God directed Jeremiah to Give God's own words about their choices... and the people didn't like it. Jeremiah bore the brunt of their anger.

<sup>9</sup> ¶ **Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and because of his holy words.**  
<sup>10</sup> **For the land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right.**

What they were experiencing were some of the curses found in Deuteronomy 28:23-24.

<sup>11</sup> **"Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares the LORD.** <sup>12</sup> **Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness, into which they shall be driven and fall, for I will bring disaster upon them in the year of their punishment, declares the LORD.** <sup>13</sup> **In the prophets of Samaria I saw an unsavory thing: they prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray.** <sup>14</sup> **But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah."** <sup>15</sup> **Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets: "Behold, I will feed them with bitter food and give them poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone out into all the land."**

<sup>16</sup> ¶ **Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.** <sup>17</sup> **They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'"** <sup>18</sup> **For who among them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?** <sup>19</sup> **Behold, the storm of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked.** <sup>20</sup> **The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly.** <sup>21</sup> **"I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.** <sup>22</sup> **But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.**

In this next section pay attention to the words "declares the LORD."

<sup>23</sup> ¶ **"Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away?** <sup>24</sup> **Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.** <sup>25</sup> **I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!'** <sup>26</sup> **How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart,** <sup>27</sup> **who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal?** <sup>28</sup> **Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my**

word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. <sup>29</sup> Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? <sup>30</sup> Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who steal my words from one another. <sup>31</sup> Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who use their tongues and declare, 'declares the LORD.' <sup>32</sup> Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the LORD, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the LORD.

In these next verses the word "burden" appears several times. It is translated as follows... ESV, KJV, CSB "burden", NASB & NKJ "oracle", NIV "message", and NLT "prophecy." This was a burden or message that the prophet felt God had laid on his heart.

<sup>33</sup> ¶ "When one of this people, or a prophet or a priest asks you, 'What is the burden of the LORD?' you shall say to them, 'You are the burden, and I will cast you off, declares the LORD.' <sup>34</sup> And as for the prophet, priest, or one of the people who says, 'The burden of the LORD,' I will punish that man and his household. <sup>35</sup> Thus shall you say, every one to his neighbor and every one to his brother, 'What has the LORD answered?' or 'What has the LORD spoken?' <sup>36</sup> But 'the burden of the LORD' you shall mention no more, for the burden is every man's own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. <sup>37</sup> Thus you shall say to the prophet, 'What has the LORD answered you?' or 'What has the LORD spoken?' <sup>38</sup> But if you say, 'The burden of the LORD,' thus says the LORD, 'Because you have said these words, "The burden of the LORD," when I sent to you, saying, "You shall not say, 'The burden of the LORD,'" <sup>39</sup> therefore, behold, I will surely lift you up and cast you away from my presence, you and the city that I gave to you and your fathers. <sup>40</sup> And I will bring upon you everlasting reproach and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.'"

Here was the problem. The prophets in Jerusalem, instead of hearing from the LORD and declaring His words, were declaring the thoughts from their own hearts and imaginations. Why did they do this? What are the possibilities? 1. They were not saved in an OT sense. They never did follow the LORD. 2. They were not true prophets who had ever heard from the LORD. 3. It was easier to prophesy what the people wanted to hear than what the LORD's word was. This was easier on the prophets emotionally when the LORD's real word was tough. Hear again the words of verse 22 and 28.

<sup>22</sup> But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.

<sup>28</sup> Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD.

This is where the "take away" is this morning. Let me say right up, none of us would ever claim to be a prophet in the biblical sense. But at the same time we can hear from the LORD through something that didn't fully exist in Jeremiah's day... the completed Bible, the full counsel of the Word of God. Here are a few questions for you.

1<sup>st</sup> are you going to be faithful to God's Word in your own life? 2<sup>nd</sup> when others are taking paths that are not in sync with God's Word, and ask you for your counsel or help, what will you say? I have found that there is a direct connection of two things here... the strength of the relationship we have with the individual who is taking the wrong path and the emotional cost that we will pay by being faithful to God's Word. This is the same problem the prophets in Jerusalem faced. There was a strong relationship of authority that the prophets had with the people of Jerusalem. To be faithful to God's word they were going to pay the same high price that Jeremiah was paying. Or they could go with the flow. They chose the easy path... to go with the flow. But God's judgment was going to rain down on them for this. So, when you are asked for counsel or help what will you choose to do? Will you take the easy path in your words or the one that could cost you dearly? Will you be faithful to God's Word in those times, not only in what you say but also in your call from God to be loving? It can cost you, but being faithful to God's Word is the only choice that has the hope of bringing the best results.