

## ***Second Baptist Church of Doylestown***

### ***Jeremiah Chapters 23-24***

***1/7/15***

#### ***Bible Study Notes - Chapter 23***

##### **The Righteous Branch - Verses 1-8**

*"Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: "Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done," declares the LORD. <sup>3</sup> "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. <sup>4</sup> I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the LORD. <sup>5</sup> "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior. <sup>7</sup> "So then, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' <sup>8</sup> but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' Then they will live in their own land."*

**23:1-4** Those responsible to lead Israel in God's path were the very ones responsible for Israel's present plight, and so God had decreed harsh judgment against them. Leaders are held responsible for those entrusted to their care. Whom has God placed in your care? Remember that you are accountable to God for those you influence and lead.

**23:5-6** Jeremiah contrasted the present corrupt leaders with the coming Messiah, the perfect King, who would come from David's line to reign over Israel.

##### **Lying Prophets - Verses 9-31**

*<sup>9</sup> Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones tremble. I am like a drunken man, like a strong man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and his holy words. <sup>10</sup> The land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land lies parched and the pastures in the wilderness are withered. The prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly. <sup>11</sup> "Both prophet and priest are godless; even in my temple I find their wickedness," declares the LORD. <sup>12</sup> "Therefore their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and there they will fall. I will bring disaster on them in the year they are punished," declares the LORD. <sup>13</sup> "Among the prophets of Samaria I saw this repulsive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray. <sup>14</sup> And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that not one of them turns from their wickedness. They are all like Sodom to me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah." <sup>15</sup> Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty says concerning the prophets: "I will make them eat bitter food and drink poisoned water, because from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread throughout the land." <sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>17</sup> They keep saying to those who despise me, 'The LORD says: You will have peace.' And to all who follow the*

*stubbornness of their hearts they say, 'No harm will come to you.'* <sup>18</sup> *But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word?* <sup>19</sup> *See, the storm of the LORD will burst out in wrath, a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked.* <sup>20</sup> *The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand it clearly.* <sup>21</sup> *I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied.* <sup>22</sup> *But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.* <sup>23</sup> *"Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away?"* <sup>24</sup> *Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.* <sup>25</sup> *"I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!'"* <sup>26</sup> *How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds?* <sup>27</sup> *They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their ancestors forgot my name through Baal worship.* <sup>28</sup> *Let the prophet who has a dream recount the dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the LORD.* <sup>29</sup> *"Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"* <sup>30</sup> *"Therefore," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me."* <sup>31</sup> *Yes," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The LORD declares.'"* <sup>32</sup> *Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the LORD. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the LORD.*

**23:9-14** How did the nation become so corrupt? A major factor was false prophecy. The false prophets had a large, enthusiastic audience and were very popular because they made the people believe that all was well. By contrast, Jeremiah's message from God was unpopular because it showed the people how bad they were. There are four warning signs of false prophets—characteristics we need to watch for even today: (1) They may appear to speak God's message, but they do not live according to God's principles. (2) They water down God's message in order to make it more palatable. (3) They encourage their listeners, often subtly, to disobey God. (4) They tend to be arrogant and self-serving, appealing to the desires of their audience instead of being true to God's Word.

**23:14** Sodom and Gomorrah were sinful cities destroyed by God (Genesis 19:23-24). In the Bible they typify the ultimate in degrading, sinful behavior and rebellion against God.

**23:20** "In the days to come you will understand it clearly" means that the people would see the truth of this prophecy when Jerusalem fell.

**23:21-24** In Jeremiah's time, those who claimed to speak for God were often guilty of representing a deity they thought of as limited and localized—a neighborhood god. Their gods frequently had limited interests and shortsighted awareness. God declares his omnipresence with a question: "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" We make the same mistake those would-be prophets made when we assume God doesn't know or care about the situations in our lives or when we question his ability to handle things beyond our control. How big is the God you worship?

**23:28** True prophets and false prophets are as different as straw and grain. Worthless straw is useless for food and blows away with the wind; it cannot compare in value to the nourishing grain. To share the gospel is a great responsibility because the way we present it and live it will encourage people either to accept it or reject it. Whether we speak from a pulpit, teach in a class, or share with friends, we are entrusted with accurately communicating and living out God's Word. As you share God's Word with friends and neighbors, they will look for its effectiveness in your life. Unless it has changed you, why should they let it change them? If you preach it, make sure you live it!

## False Prophecy – Verses 33-40

<sup>33</sup> "When these people, or a prophet or a priest, ask you, 'What is the message from the LORD?' say to them, 'What message? I will forsake you, declares the LORD.'<sup>34</sup> If a prophet or a priest or anyone else claims, 'This is a message from the LORD,' I will punish them and their household.<sup>35</sup> This is what each of you keeps saying to your friends and other Israelites: 'What is the LORD's answer?' or 'What has the LORD spoken?'<sup>36</sup> But you must not mention 'a message from the LORD' again, because each one's word becomes their own message. So you distort the words of the living God, the LORD Almighty, our God.<sup>37</sup> This is what you keep saying to a prophet: 'What is the LORD's answer to you?' or 'What has the LORD spoken?'<sup>38</sup> Although you claim, 'This is a message from the LORD,' this is what the LORD says: You used the words, 'This is a message from the LORD,' even though I told you that you must not claim, 'This is a message from the LORD.'<sup>39</sup> Therefore, I will surely forget you and cast you out of my presence along with the city I gave to you and your ancestors.<sup>40</sup> I will bring on you everlasting disgrace—everlasting shame that will not be forgotten."

**23:33-40** People mocked Jeremiah by saying sarcastically, "What is the message from the LORD?" It seemed that Jeremiah brought nothing but God's sad news of condemnation. But this sad news was the truth. If they had accepted it, they would have had to repent and turn to God. Because they did not want to do this, they rejected Jeremiah's message. Have you ever rejected a message or made fun of it because it would require you to change your ways? Before dismissing someone who brings sad news, look carefully at your motives.

## Bible Study Notes – Chapter 24

### Two Baskets of Figs – Verses 1-10

After Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and the officials, the skilled workers and the artisans of Judah were carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the LORD.<sup>2</sup> One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very bad figs, so bad they could not be eaten.<sup>3</sup> Then the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "Figs," I answered. "The good ones are very good, but the bad ones are so bad they cannot be eaten."<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me:<sup>5</sup> "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians.<sup>6</sup> My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them.<sup>7</sup> I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.<sup>8</sup> "'But like the bad figs, which are so bad they cannot be eaten,' says the LORD, 'so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or live in Egypt.<sup>9</sup> I will make them abhorrent and an offense to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, a curse<sup>[c]</sup> and an object of ridicule, wherever I banish them.<sup>10</sup> I will send the sword, famine and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their ancestors.'"

**24:1** This happened in 597 B.C., when Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon, and Zedekiah became king. Often royal officials were exiled to keep them from exerting power and starting a rebellion. Skilled craftsmen and artisans were taken because they were valuable for Babylon's building program. Jeremiah foretold this event in 22:24-28.

**24:2-10** The good figs represented the exiles to Babylon, not because they themselves were good, but because their hearts would respond to God. He would preserve them and bring them back to the land. The poor figs represented those who remained in Judah or ran away to Egypt. Those people may have arrogantly

believed they would be blessed if they remained in the land or escaped to Egypt, but the opposite was true because God would use the captivity to refine the exiles. We may assume we are blessed when life goes well and cursed when it does not. But trouble is a blessing when it makes us stronger, and prosperity is a curse if it entices us away from God. If you are facing trouble, ask God to help you grow stronger for him. If things are going your way, ask God to help you use your prosperity for him.

**24:6** The exiles in Babylon were cared for by the Lord. Although they were moved to a foreign land, their captivity was not enslavement. The people could function in business and own homes. Some, like Daniel, even held high positions in the government (see Daniel 2:48).