



Jeremiah 26

Tape #7293
Jeremiah 26
By Chuck Smith

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah there came this word from the Lord, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word (26:1-2):

So the Lord has called Jeremiah to go down to the court of the Lord's house. Now, notice this is in the first year of the reign of Jehoiakim. Back in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah, the Lord sent Jeremiah down to the Lord's house to proclaim a message there. This was probably, the seventh chapter, was probably during the reign of Josiah the king, and perhaps shortly after they had refurbished the temple, and had begun temple worship again.

You will remember that in the seventh chapter, when he was commanded to go to the Lord's house to preach the message of the people, basically the message in chapter seven, was that they were not to trust in lying vanities saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these". And we learn from the seventh chapter that the people had come to a place where they were trusting in the fact that they had the temple, and they had restored the temple worship. They were trusting in that as a divine kind of a protection from the enemies. They thought that as long as they had the temple and temple worship that they could live however they please, but God would protect them from their enemies, and Jeremiah was saying, "That's not true. You're trusting in a lying vanity. It's not the outward observance of the temple that's going to save anybody. It's the heart that God is interested in". Jeremiah was rebuking them for those kinds of feelings when they were coming to the temple of God thinking, "Well, here we are doing God a service, therefore God is going to divinely intervene, in our behalf against our enemies."

Now here, in the twenty sixth chapter, he again is commanded by God to go down to the temple. It's during the reign of Jehoiakim, who was the son of Josiah. No doubt it was during a feast time. As we pointed out in the seventh chapter, that probably happened at the great feast of Passover that was held by Josiah. This also was at a feast time. Now, during the feast, the three major feasts that the Jews had, they were required under the law, to come and present themselves before the Lord at the temple, there in Jerusalem. So, the Jews would come from all the provinces for these three holidays. All of the male Jews were required to come, and of course, their wives and children would often come with them. So it would be a time of great numbers of people flooding the city, at these feasts. Josephus tells us that as many as a million Jews would come to celebrate these feasts during the times of Christ. So, a large number of people, notice, from all the cities of Judah. Thus it indicates that it was probably at a feast time, when they were all gathering, according to the Lord, to worship the Lord there in Jerusalem.

Now the Lord told him to speak to the people, all of the words, don't diminish. Don't tone down the message. It's not going to be a comfortable message. The people aren't gonna want to hear it, but don't tone it down. I think that sometimes there is a tendency on the part of ministers to sort of try to soften the message a bit, to make it more pleasing or more acceptable to the people. You know we don't like to hear about certain aspects of God's judgement to come. So, there is the tendency to just tone it down a bit, but the Lord said, "Don't diminish".

Now, in the twenty second chapter of the book of Revelation, as you get to the end of the book, the Lord there pronounces a heavy curse upon anyone who would take away from the words of the prophecy. If you would dare to take away from the word of the prophecy, the Lord said He would take away your name out of the Book of Life. He also warned about adding to it. If you add to the words of this prophecy, there shall be added unto you all the plagues that are written in the prophecy. In the book of Deuteronomy, after Moses had given to them the law, the Lord warned not to take away from or add to the words of the law. Thus as God commands Jeremiah to go down to the temple, the court of the temple and to declare this message to the

people. He said, “Don’t diminish a word.”

And if they will hearken to you and they will turn from their evil ways, then I may change from the evil which I purpose to do unto them, because of the evil of their doings (26:3).

Now, evil must be punished. Sometimes we see people doing evil things, and it appears that they are getting by with it. That is always sort of appalling, to see people seemingly get by with evil. But God must punish evil, but He is so patient and He is so longsuffering. Now these people who were coming outwardly, intensively to worship God, were in their hearts and in their daily lives, evil people. Now, attendance at the house of God cannot and does not atone for evil. God wants a person to amend and to change their ways, and that was basically the message at the temple. “If you will change your ways”, God said. “then you will dwell in this land.” But the call of God was the repentance and the turning from evil. Now God is saying to Jeremiah, “Don’t take away from the words, don’t diminish it. Because if they will repent of their evil that they are doing, it may be that I will change, and I will not bring the evil upon them, which I have declared.” The judgement of God could be stayed. The people could continue to dwell there in the land.

And you shall say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; If you will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, and to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but you have not hearkened; Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth (26:4-6).

Now this was the warning that Jeremiah was to give to the people, and that is, if they did not listen to God and begin to follow the law of God, and to listen to the warnings of the servants of God, the prophets that He sent unto them. Then God would make this temple like Shiloh.

Now, Shiloh was the place where they first set up the tabernacle when they came into the land of promise. It was the place where the people would gather to worship God. When they first took the land, they did not take the city of Jerusalem. It was not until David became king, that the city of Jerusalem was conquered. It was a city that is set strategically, so that it is an easily defended city. Hard to take the city of Jerusalem. The Jebusites lived in the city through the time of David, and thus the center of worship was at Shiloh. That’s where they had built the tabernacle and that’s where the people would go to worship God on the holidays. But now at the time that Jeremiah is prophesying, the area of Shiloh had already been conquered, it had been laid waste. There was nothing there but just the rubble and the ruins of the old city.

Thus the Lord is declaring that unless these people will turn and begin to obey the law of God, and follow after the law, listen to the warnings of the prophets, that the temple and the city of Jerusalem would become like Shiloh. That is it would be rubble, it would lie in ruin. Now this is a heavy duty message for people who are trusting in the fact that they have the temple for their security. They were looking at the temple as their guarantee for security. “You know, as long as we have the temple we can’t be conquered”, and for the prophet to say that this place, this temple will be like Shiloh, it will lie in ruin, was very disturbing and upsetting to the people.

So it came to pass, when Jeremiah was finished speaking, so the priests and the prophets, [jumped a verse, verse seven] so the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord (26:8).

Now the priests and the prophets were corrupted. They were mercenaries, they were profiting off of religion. Not unlike many television evangelists. So, what Jeremiah was saying was really interpreted by them, as a direct attack against them.

So it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto the people (26:8),

Now it’s interesting that they let him finish his speech. They were getting angry, but they let him finish his speech because, the Lord had given him the words to speak, and thus the Lord, more or less protected him until he had finished his speech. I believe that when God calls you on a mission that God will take care of you, watch over you, and protect you until the mission is accomplished. If you’re obeying the word of the Lord and doing what God commanded you to do, God’s going to take care of you.

We read of the two prophets in Revelation in the eleventh chapter, these two prophets that are going to come and how they are going to be hated by the people, because of the things they are telling them. They are

things that people don't want to hear. Yet they are speaking the word of God, and it said, "When they had finished their testimony, the Lord gave power to the beast to overcome them, and he killed them; and, their bodies laid in the streets for three days." But they weren't able to touch them until they finished their testimony. I sort of believe that God just watches over you until He's through with you, and then when He's through with you, who wants to stick around! So, they waited until Jeremiah had finished his speech.

Then the priests and the prophets and all of the people took Jeremiah, and they said, You shall surely die (26:8).

They were angry because he had spoken against the temple in saying the temple shall be destroyed. Thus they say, "you shall surely die".

Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, [That's the thing that really galled them, to say that the temple was going to be in rubble.] and this city shall be without an inhabitant? So all of the people gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord (26:9).

So, the religious leaders stirred up the people against Jeremiah, and they were planning to put him to death. They had a trial and sentenced him to death. Now when the princes of Judah, now these are the leaders, the king and the rulers.

When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house to the house of the lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house. Then the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and to all the people saying, [They're making now, the accusation and the charges] This man is worthy to die; for he has prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. [And because of his prophecy, they interpreted it as blasphemy, and thus guilty of death, and he was prophesying in the name of the Lord, and if he's prophesying in the name of the Lord, something that didn't happen, then that prophet was to be put to death.] Then Jeremiah spoke up in his own defense, and he said to all the princes and all the people, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all of the words that you have heard. [I've only told you what the Lord told me to tell you. The Lord sent me.] Therefore now, [and he doesn't back down! He says,] amend your ways, [repent, change] and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he has pronounced against you. [That's what he said in the beginning. If you obey the Lord, and all, then the Lord will not bring the evil upon you. Now he's telling them again, "amend your ways!"] Then he said,] As for me, I am in your hand (26:10-14):

Do what you want to do. Do what seems good. Those men of God who have committed themselves fully and totally to doing the work of the will of God, are men who will not back down in the face of opposition. They are men who have no fear of death. They feel that they are on a divine mission, and so, you know, "Do what you want to me, as far as I'm concerned, do what you want. Want to kill me? Go ahead."

I think the three Hebrew children who at this very time, are already in Babylon, they've already been taken captive to Babylon, and soon they will be standing before Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, facing charges that will lead to their death. For Nebuchadnezzar, had made a great image of all gold, which represented the Babylonian empire. Now, he'd had a dream and saw an image that had a golden head and shoulders of silver, stomach of brass, legs of iron, feet of iron and clay, and Daniel told him that that dream, that image, represented the kingdoms that were going to rule over the world. That his was the golden empire of Babylon, but it was going to be replaced by an inferior empire the Medes and the Persians, which would be replaced by the Grecian empire, which would fall to the Roman empire. He sort of laid out for him the kingdoms that would rule over the world. In defiance of that, he built this image of all gold, by which he was saying, "Babylon will never fall. Babylon will live forever." Thus he ordered that everyone bow down to this image, to this concept of the eternal character of Babylon.

Well these three Hebrew children refused to bow, they sounded the music, and everyone bowed, but they would not bow to the image, to the concept. So, it was reported to Nebuchadnezzar that these three fellows were in insurrection, they refused to bow, and Nebuchadnezzar called them in and he says, "I hear that when the music sounded, you didn't bow", you know, and they said, "Nebuchadnezzar, we're not careful in how we answer you concerning this thing." And he warned them, he said, "Hey I'm going to give you another chance. If you don't bow, Into the fiery furnace for you." They said, "We're not even careful in how we answer you on this thing, for the God that we serve is able to deliver us from your burning, fiery

furnace, and even if He doesn't deliver us, we're still not gonna bow." Sort of like Jeremiah, "Hey, my life is in your hands. Do with me what you want. I'm just telling you what God said. You don't like it, you know, do what you want to me, but this is what God is telling you." So, these three fellows had that same kind of you know, "Well, we're not gonna bow. Throw us in the furnace if you want. The God we serve is able to deliver us, but even if He doesn't, we're still not gonna bow."

Paul the apostle, when he was on his way to Jerusalem, and had the warnings of the Holy Spirit, that bonds and imprisonment awaited them when he got there, his friends began to weep and they said, "Oh Paul! Don't go to Jerusalem! We can't stand to see you in jail Paul! Don't go Paul! Please don't go!" And Paul says, "What mean ye by these tears? I'm not afraid to be bound! I'm prepared to die for Jesus Christ!". So, that commitment, there is no fear, you stand up, you tell the word of God, you don't back down with threats. Because you made that kind of commitment, that "I'm going to just serve the Lord no matter what the cost", and as Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain". How do you threaten a man with death, who has that attitude? Death is no threat to him. So, death is no threat to Jeremiah. They said, "You shall surely die! This man shall be put to death. He said that this temple's going to be like Shiloh, Jerusalem's going to be leveled like Shiloh!". Jeremiah said, "I've only told you what the Lord told me to tell you. If you fellows will change, then it will be that God will change and won't bring the judgement on this place. As for me, hey, I'm in your hands, do with me what you want."

But know this for certain, that if you put me to death, you will surely bring innocent blood upon yourself, and upon this city, [You're only adding to your crimes, you're only adding to your guilt, if you put me to death] You're bringing innocent blood upon yourselves, this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all of these words in your ears. [It's true. God has sent me to tell you these things. So, if you kill me, you're only making the judgement all the more severe.] So the princes and all the people said to the priests, and to the prophets: This man is not worthy to die: for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord (26:15).

Now, look how fickle the people are! Before the princes come down, they're joining with the priests and the prophets, saying "Hey, you ought to put him to death." And now the princes come down, and their cooler heads, and the people turn with the princes, and they say to the prophets, "Hey, what does he got that's so bad? He's just spoken to us in the name of the Lord."

We had an interesting experience when we were in Israel a few years ago. We were up in the northern part of Israel, near the Lebanese border. We were having a meeting of the group that went with us, there in the kibbutz, known as Kaphar Giladee, and at that meeting, we had Major Hadot, who was in charge of the Lebanese forces there in southern Lebanon, and also we had with us the Colonel who was in charge of the Israeli defense forces in the northern parts of Israel. We had become friends with both of these men, and we had invited Major Hadot to speak to our group. We had an evening of fellowship with our group together, singing, and we had these special guests that were there. Many of the people who were at the kibbutz Kaphar Giladee, they had gotten to really like our group, and so they had come and it was just a big meeting all together. Well there were some young Jewish believers who lived in an area nearby, who had their house broken into by force, by some of the radical Orthodox Jews, who were angry because they were Christians. They destroyed their furniture, and beat these guys up, and they were just, and I mean, just because they were Christians. It made these Orthodox Jews angry. So, I invited these young fellows to also come to the meeting, and I thought it would be good to have our people meet some Jewish believers. They were splendid young people, and as they started to address our group, the young fellow said, "Well first I would like to speak to my brothers here", and he began to speak in Hebrew. In which he began to give them a testimony in how that he found Jesus as the Messiah. Now we had one guy who was oh so friendly and nice. Always smiling and making up to our grandchildren. Just "Oh you sweet little...", and, "Oh you're so beautiful...", and just you know, all the, just the soul of sweetness. But as this young fellow started to talk in Hebrew, I saw her face, contort and change. Oh you could see, she was just beginning to steam! I thought, "What is he saying?"

You remember when Paul, the apostle, was being beaten up and the Jews were trying to kill him, when they found him in the temple and the Roman guard came rushing out of the fortress of Antonio, and they

rescued Paul. They delivered him from that crowd, and when Paul got up on that porch, he said to the captain of the guard, "Can I speak to these people a minute?" and the guy says sure, and so Paul starts talking to them in Hebrew. Basically he starts giving them his testimony. He said, "I understand how you guys feel, I was like you one time. You know, to persecute the church and all, but I was on the road to Damascus, and the Lord met me, and He said, why are you persecuting me..." and Paul gave them his testimony of conversion, and when he got to the place in his testimony, where he said, "And the Lord said, I am sending you to the Gentiles", that ticked the crowd off. They began to throw dirt in the air, they began to scream, they began, they just became rabid! And they had to pull him inside the fortress to protect him. The people were almost rioting. Now he was talking in Hebrew, and the guard didn't understand what he was saying, and he said, "Examine the guy by scourging him, and find out what he said to those people! You know, made them so wild." And I was wondering what is this guy saying? He's making them so wild, I mean you see this gal, you can feel the tension just building. This Colonel, a real smooth guy, some of the people from the kibbutz, and they're tough, they live under difficult circumstances, it makes them hard and tough, and as this guy was sharing his testimony, they said, "Let's kill him when he gets out of here." They started talking about killing the guy, and this Colonel turned to them, and he said, "You guys observe sabbath? "No.", "Are you kosher?" "No." "Do you believe in God?" "No". Then why are you worried about this guy? Well then, let him alone. He wants to believe in that stuff, let him go ahead." But he cooled them down. They changed. "Why should we kill him, you know".

People are fickle, and so here are the priests stirring them up saying, "Let's kill him, let's kill him" and the princes come down, and "Well, you know, the guy shouldn't be put to death, he's actually just speaking to us in the name of the Lord".

So there rose up certain of the elders, [the leaders] of the land, and they spoke to all of the assembly of the people, [And they brought up some legal precedence. First of all, there was this prophet by the name of Micah, and we have the book of Micah, the prophecy of Micah, in our old testament]. It is Micah the Morasthite, and he prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, not too long ago when Hezekiah was the king, and he spoke to all of the people of Judah saying, Thus saith the lord of hosts; Zion [or the city of Jerusalem] is going to be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps [that is rubble], and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest (26:17-18).

So Micah was basically prophesying to the people, the same kind of destruction that Jeremiah had prophesied. It was during the reign of Hezekiah, who was a king who was inclined towards the Lord. Jehoiakim, who was king now, was not, he was an evil king. But, they bring up the case of Micah, and he said,

Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all of Judah put him to death? did not he fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls (26:19).

So, bringing up the case of Micah, the history, Hezekiah he didn't put him to death, in fact, he repented, and thus they bought a little time. So, "If we kill the prophet, we're only going to be bringing guilt upon our souls." Now, that ends that episode. Verse twenty tells us of another prophet, and it's sort of in contrast to Jeremiah.

There was also a man during the reign of Jehoiakim, that prophesied in the name of the Lord, and his name was Urijah and he was the son of Shemaiah of Kirjathjearim, and he prophesied against the city and against this land according to all of the words of Jeremiah. [He was saying, basically the same thing that Jeremiah was saying.] And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and he fled, and he went to Egypt (26:20-21).

So, rather than standing up as did Jeremiah, Jeremiah stood up to them and said, "Hey, you want to put me to death? I'm in your hands, do what you want. But you 're gonna just bring innocent blood upon you. You're gonna add to your guilt". Instead, Urijah, when he heard they wanted to kill him, he fled to Egypt.

And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who

slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

So, in contrast to Jeremiah, this other prophet saying basically the same things as Jeremiah, when they sought to put him to death, he fled. He ran. Now at this time, there was a treaty between Egypt and Judah. In fact, Jehoiakim was a vassal king to the Pharaoh, he was actually paying tribute to the Pharaoh, taxes to the Pharaoh. So, when Urijah fled to Egypt, he really fled to the wrong place. Because there was this really, extradition treaty between Israel and Egypt at the time. So the king sent down men to bring him back, and when he was brought back, he was killed. Jeremiah stood up to the pressure and he lived. The man ran and was killed. So basically it's contrasting the two of them and their prophesies.

Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death (26:24).

There were those who stood up with Jeremiah, and his life was spared. Thus the prophecy at the temple gate and the result of that prophecy.

Now as we move into chapters twenty seven and twenty eight, these are sort of illustrated kinds of prophecies. And we'll be looking at these next week, because the two chapters go together, we will wait and take them next week, so that we can take them together, because they deal with the same subjects as they are prophecies concerning yokes.

Now, the Lord told Jeremiah to make this yoke out of wood and to wear it around the city. Now the yoke was the thing they put on an ox, so they could pull a plow, so they could control it. It was servitude. It was the sign of servitude. You come under the yoke of something, you come under servitude to it. And so he had this wooden yoke, and he was going around town with this wooden yoke over him and he said, "Thus will Judah come under the yoke of Babylon." Well this false prophet came, and he took the yoke and he broke it and he said, "Thus will I break the yoke of Babylon from off of Judah." And we'll get into the whole drama next week. It's an interesting chapter. He then made an iron yoke and said, "Break that one pal!" So, we find a little drama in our next lesson in Jeremiah.

Shall we stand? Don't forget if your in need of prayer, you may go back to the prayer room and the elders will be back there to minister to you. If you'd like to wait upon the Lord, you can go to the fellowship hall, and I understand that after waiting upon the Lord, they're gonna have some refreshments and all, sort of, I guess there's sort of a group that has sort of a neat, kind of a close nit fellowship over there. Become a part of it and go over and spend some time just waiting upon the Lord and fellowshiping together. Fellowship is a glorious thing because it comforts us so much, and fellowshiping around the table is always a wonderful thing.

May God bless you as you join in fellowship this week, around the tables and in your celebrations. May the Spirit of the Lord just really move in your hearts in a special way, that may your heart just be filled with love and rejoicing as we remember, God's love for us, as He sent us His Son, to be the Savior of the world.