

Not Forgetting God, Part 1

NOT FORGETTING WHO GOD IS!

- (Deuteronomy 9:3a ESV) Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God.



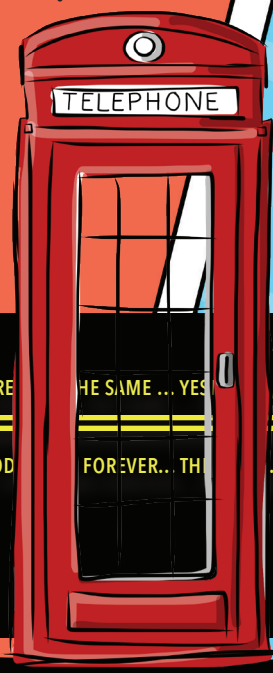
- (Exodus 24:17 ESV) Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

Old Testament

- (Deuteronomy 4:24 ESV) For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

New Testament

- (Hebrews 12:29 ESV) for our God is a consuming fire.



... THE SAME ... YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER ...

... THE SAME ... YES

... TODAY AND FOREVER ... THE SAME ... YESTERDAY, TODAY, FOREVER ...

... THE SAME ... YESTERDAY, TODAY

FOREVER... TH

... YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER ... THE SAME ... YESTERDAY, TODAY, FOREVER ...

"SO, NO, GOD DIDN'T SLIP INTO THE PHONE BOOTH AND CHANGE IDENTITIES BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS."

■ AN OUTLINE OF JEREMIAH 23: "WORDS OF FIRE"

—THE GOD WHO JUDGES & THE PEOPLE WHO ARE JUDGED—

1 THE GOD WHO JUDGES

—JEREMIAH 23:23-29

1. **GOD SEES US:** God is not a small, limited God from whom we humans can hide in secret places, 23:23-24.
 - (Jeremiah 23:23–24 ESV) Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? 24 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.
2. **GOD HEARS US:** God is not an inattentive God who is unaware of our words and the deceit of our hearts, 23:25-26.
 - (Jeremiah 23:25–26 ESV) I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' 26 How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart.
3. **GOD WATCHES US:** God is a God who is jealous for his name and for his word, 23:27-29.

How are these prophets making the people forget God's name? And why is God so angry with them?

(Jeremiah 23:27–29 ESV) **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? 28 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. 29 **Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?**

- (Deuteronomy 4:24 ESV) **For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.**

*****Moses' characterization of Yahweh as El Qanna' (Impassioned El) is equally dramatic. The usual interpretation of qn' as "jealous" is misleading because we commonly view jealousy as an illegitimate disposition akin to envy or

covetousness. **However, in the Old Testament, this term usually speaks of the legitimate passion that is aroused when interference from a third party threatens a proper relationship,** particularly a marriage relationship when another "lover" enters the picture. **Yahweh is an impassioned God, who treasures Israel as his covenant people. This love is fueled, not by an exploitative need to dominate, but by ardor for the well-being of the object.** [Block, D. I. (2012). *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy*. (T. Muck, Ed.) (p. 132). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.]

How do we have God's word and speak God's word faithfully? By doing the opposite of the unfaithful prophets. ... "but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully" ... (23:28).

- **STEP ONE—NEGATIVELY:** We do not "speak our mind" and we do not listen to those who do speak their "own minds."
- (Jeremiah 23:16 ESV) 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.**
- **STEP TWO—POSITIVELY:** We speak what comes "from the mouth of the LORD."

J.L. Mackay ... "who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another" ... **The outcome they intend or plan ... is not one in which the people are no longer familiar with the sound of the LORD's name, but one in which they will lose sight of who the LORD really is and what he had revealed his true character to be.** How did the prophets intend to achieve this? By reiterating their false messages until they became part of the accepted way of thinking about things. **Those who have their perception of God molded by falsehood can then be persuaded to accept any message at all.** [Mackay, J. L. (2004). *Jeremiah: An Introduction and Commentary: Chapters 21–*

2 THE PEOPLE WHO ARE JUDGED

—JEREMIAH 23:1-22, 30-40

***SO WHAT ARE WE TO DO IN VIEW OF THOSE WHO
WOULD MAKE US FORGET THE NAME OF GOD?

—KNOW WHO THEY WERE (AND ARE)—

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THESE PEOPLE WERE
THE APPOINTED LEADERS OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE.

1. They were the shepherds of the LORD who had scattered LORD's flock, 23:1-8.
 - (Jeremiah 23:1–2 ESV) “Woe to the shepherds who **destroy** and **scatter** the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. 2 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have **scattered** my flock and have **driven** them **away**, and you have **not attended to** them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds,” declares the LORD.
2. They were the prophets of God who had brought ungodliness rather than godliness to the land, 23:9-15.
 - (Jeremiah 23:15 ESV) 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.**”

—KNOW WHAT THEY DID (AND DO)—

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT
THEY BROUGHT UNGODLINESS TO THE LAND.

1. They disobeyed the LORD and did not reveal his true character to the people.
 - (Deuteronomy 4:23–24 ESV) **Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God,** which he made with you, and make a

carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. 24 **For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.**

2. They spoke from their **MINDS** rather than from the **MOUTH** of the LORD, 23:16.
 - (Jeremiah 23:16 ESV) 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.**
3. They continually—*AS IN ... EVERY SUNDAY MORNING FROM THE PULPIT*—affirmed those who actually despised the word of the LORD and stubbornly followed their own hearts, 23:17.
 - (Jeremiah 23:17 ESV) 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.’”
4. They did not stand in the council of the LORD to see and hear his word, 23:18.
 - (Jeremiah 23:18 ESV) 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?
5. They were not sent by God and did not speak his words to turn people away from the evil direction of their lives and the evil things they were doing, 23:19-22.
 - (Jeremiah 23:19–22 ESV) Behold, the storm of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. 20 **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. 21 **I did not send the prophets,** yet they ran; **I did not speak to them,** yet they prophesied. 22 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.
6. They possessed a stolen, contrived religion of which God was opposed, 23:30-31.

- (Jeremiah 23:30–31 ESV) Therefore, behold, **I am against the prophets**, declares the LORD, who steal my words from one another. 31 Behold, **I am against the prophets**, declares the LORD, who use their tongues and declare, ‘declares the LORD.’

God is against them because they steal his words from one another but do not receive his words from him. This may mean that they actually steal their ideas and sermon direction from what is trending ... what is popular ... from another unfaithful preacher.

It may also mean that they “steal” a prophecy from a true prophet of God but use their skillful tongue to “make it their own” ... put their own signature touch on the message.

John Arthur Thompson gives us this insight on verse 31 from his Jeremiah commentary: There is a wordplay here which is difficult to capture in English, literally, “they take up (use) their (own) tongue and oracle an oracle.” The phrase which occurs many times in Jeremiah and is translated as Yahweh’s word ... “they oracle an oracle.” The verb occurs only here. The meaning is that the message of the false prophets originated from themselves and was presented in their own words with something of a flourish as though it were a word from Yahweh. [Thompson, J. A. (1980). The Book of Jeremiah (p. 502). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.]

Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones in his Jeremiah commentary gives us this insight from verse 31: That use their tongues; literally, that take their tongue, like a workman’s tool—as if prophecy could be turned out to order. [Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). Jeremiah (Vol. 1, p. 517). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.]

And one more ... from John Mackay ... Firstly, there is the fact that they steal from one another words supposedly from me. The Hebrew is concise and ironic ... obviously does not refer to a true message from the LORD, but one that is merely presented as such. Here we see one way in which the false prophets generated their

messages: prophetic plagiarism. They pilfered from one another what they were going to say! This may also possibly refer to the prophets divorcing divine words from their original context and passing them on to one another to use, no longer conveying truth but subverting it to conform to their own ideology. How unlike Jeremiah when the word came to him: even though he would rather not proclaim it, its impact left him unable to keep it in (20:9). [Mackay, J. L. (2004). Jeremiah: An Introduction and Commentary: Chapters 21–52 (Vol. 2, pp. 72–73). Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor.]

7. They led people astray by their lies and recklessness, 23:32a.

- (Jeremiah 23:32a ESV) 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.

8. They did not profit the people at all, 23:32b.

- (Jeremiah 23:32b ESV) So they do not profit this people at all, declares the LORD.

9. They were warned by God about playing out their relationship with God and his word—the burden, oracle—as **a dangerous charade that would ultimately lead to their being cast from God’s presence into everlasting reproach and perpetual shame, 23:33–40.**

***A charade is an absurd pretense intended to create a pleasant or respectable appearance; an act or event that is obviously false, although represented as true.

A. They were confronted for their pretense, 23:33.

Jeremiah sounds the first note of judgment telling them that they are the burden.

- (Jeremiah 23:33 ESV) 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.’

B. They were warned of punishment to come for presuming to know the word from the LORD, 23:34.

- (Jeremiah 23:34 ESV) 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.

Referencing 23:29 we should observe that anyone doing this is playing with fire—the fire of God’s holy word.

C. They were prohibited from doing anything other than asking what has the LORD spoken, 23:35.

- (Jeremiah 23:35 ESV) 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?’

D. They were clearly warned of impending, harsh judgment, 23:36-40.

They were not even to mention “the burden of the LORD” because their word would only be a perversion of the words of the living God, 23:36.

- (Jeremiah 23:36 ESV) 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.

They were only allowed to ask the prophet what God said, 23:37.

- (Jeremiah 23:37 ESV) Thus you shall say to the prophet, ‘What has the LORD answered you?’ or ‘What has the LORD spoken?’

If they took it upon themselves to do more after being severely warned then they would bring upon themselves everlasting banishment and punishment, 23:38-40.

- (Jeremiah 23:38–40 ESV) 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,’ ” 39 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. 40 And I will bring upon you everlasting

reproach and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.’ ”

COMMENTARY ON “THE BURDEN” ... OR “THE ORACLE” ...

John Arthur Thompson ... 33 The key word here and throughout vv. 33–40 is *maśśā’*, burden ... “to lift, bear, carry,” and hence the noun denotes a load or burden. ... Metaphorically it can mean a burden of leadership or of religious duty, and at times the heavy burden of God’s judgment. Often in prophetic writings it suggests a judgment or a catastrophe. The same word appears at the heading of prophetic oracles; but there it has acquired a technical sense, “argument,” “thesis,” even though the content of the passage that follows preserves the original sense of the term.

The question was posed by the people, or a prophet or a priest, What is the burden of Yahweh? By this they meant “What is the utterance of Yahweh?” **Jeremiah replies by creating a pun on the word: “You are the burden, and I will cast you off—Yahweh’s word.”** The two senses of *maśśā’* here are “oracle” and “burden.” **The note of judgment is then sounded, I will throw you down** (cf. 1:10). [Thompson, J. A. (1980). *The Book of Jeremiah* (p. 505). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.]

*****34–37 Again, if a prophet or priest or one of the people should utter *The burden of Yahweh*, then Yahweh would punish (*pāqad* ‘al) that man and his household. **It was not for those who were not called by Yahweh to utter his word. All they were permitted to do was to ask among themselves “What did Yahweh answer?” or “What did Yahweh say?” (v. 35). It was not for such as these to give utterance to the burden of Yahweh at any time. That burden was for the man to whom Yahweh entrusted his word (lit. “the man of his word”).** [Ibid. (p. 505).]

