***Jeremiah 23:25-40 “I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ 26How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, 27who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. 28“The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord. 29“Is not My word like a fire?” says the Lord, “And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? 30“Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,” says the Lord, “who steal My words every one from his neighbor. 31Behold, I am against the prophets,” says the Lord, “who use their tongues and say, ‘He says.’ 32Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” says the Lord, “and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,” says the Lord. 33“So when these people or the prophet or the priest ask you, saying, ‘What is the oracle of the Lord?’ you shall then say to them, ‘What oracle?’ I will even forsake you,” says the Lord. 34“And as for the prophet and the priest and the people who say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ I will even punish that man and his house. 35Thus every one of you shall say to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, ‘What has the Lord answered?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ 36And the oracle of the Lord you shall mention no more. For every man’s word will be his oracle, for you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God. 37Thus you shall say to the prophet, ‘What has the Lord answered you?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ 38But since you say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Because you say this word, “The oracle of the Lord!” and I have sent to you, saying, “Do not say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ ” 39therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you and forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and will cast you out of My presence. 40And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.’***

Last week, we left Jeremiah with the false prophets deceiving the people, and the land in mourning, as the blessings of God pass from the land. The priests and the pastors, meant to lead the people in worship and to keep the Law of God have instead led them to evil and condoned their wickedness. This week, we continue to see the same thing, as God prepares judgement for the nation of Judah. God is patient, but His long suffering will not continue forever.

Verses 25-27 *I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ 26How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, 27who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal.* God has heard what these prophets are saying. They believe God to be a God afar off, as we learned last week. God is a close and immediate God. The prophets prophesy dreams, or the Hebrew has the idea of them saying they are divine visions or oracles of God. God now asks – How long will this be in their hearts? How long will I bear this deceit? When will the prophets realize the abuse they are doing their position and the wrong they are bringing on the people? How long before they grasp the judgement that they have brought upon themselves? These prophets cause the people to forget God and draw people from the worship of God. They disrespect the ordinances and laws of God. They give false divine revelations and much of this is designed to serve their wicked and evil purposes. This brings people into sin, doubt, and some will even begin to hold contempt for the Lord and His ordinances. False prophets do great damage. It was true then and it is true now.

Verses 28-29 *The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord. 29“Is not My word like a fire?” says the Lord, “And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?* Dreams are dreams and the prophets must treat them as such. A dream that is consistent with the word of God can be weighed by the people, but must not be worshipped. If it is inconsistent with God’s word, it must be dismissed immediately. It must be declared only as a dream of a man, not a divine vision. The prophet with God’s word must speak it as truth, and this is to be measured against the scriptures always. The truth of the Bible is our plumb line, our scale, our ruler for any vision, or as Jeremiah calls these dreams – the oracles of God. As the wheat is to the chaff, so is God’s Word and God’s will to these dreams the prophets are having. Wheat is valuable. Chaff is worthless. Is not My word like fire, quick and powerful, refining gold and silver and burning up straw and chaff? And, like a hammer, God’s word will break the hardest heart and remove great obstacles.

Verses 30-32 *Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,” says the Lord, “who steal My words every one from his neighbor. 31Behold, I am against the prophets,” says the Lord, “who use their tongues and say, ‘He says.’ 32Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” says the Lord, “and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,” says the Lord.* God is against these false prophets and their imagined dreams. He is against those that speak in His name for their own evil purposes. Theologians have suggested that the false prophets worked together to deceive the people so that all were telling the same lies. This was an early version of Fake News I guess. They are using their own tongues and imaginings to speak on behalf of God. They are pretending to speak for God for their own purposes and profit. God says – I am against them that prophesy false dreams. It was true then and it is still true today. Then, as now, false teachers cause the people to err in their worship of God. They lead the people astray. They recklessly speak rash and groundless things, inconsistent with the Word of God. They flatter and sooth saying that peace will come, and abundance will continue, when sin has brought the enemy to their very doorstep. Their encouragement of sin causes the people to continue in that sin and feel no need to turn away. God says – Yet, I did not send them or command them. They are not My messengers. Therefore, they shall not profit the people. God will fulfill His word and calamities and judgements will come. These false prophets have not benefitted the people. In fact, they have done them great harm by withholding the Truth from the people and leading them away from the right way of repentance.

Verse 33 S*o when these people or the prophet or the priest ask you, saying, ‘What is the oracle of the Lord?’ you shall then say to them, ‘What oracle?’ I will even forsake you,” says the Lord.*We now shift our focus to those that called the word given by true prophets, including Jeremiah, a burden. The false priests and prophets hated the truth because it spoke of coming judgement and calamity.

Verse 34 *And as for the prophet and the priest and the people who say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ I will even punish that man and his house.* God will punish the false prophets speaking derision over the true prophet. He will put to shame those that boastfully assume to speak for God. These false prophets and priests will be punished.

Verse 35 *Thus every one of you shall say to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, ‘What has the Lord answered?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?* God now calls the people back to simply asking what has the Lord answered. Often, the false prophets used high sounding phrases and very large words to impress the people. God is a God of simple understanding. He is calling the true prophets back to speaking the Truth in terms the people can understand and act on. True prophets spoke to bring the people to repentance and return to the righteous ways of God, not to impress and confuse. It was true then and it is true now.

Verse 36 *And the oracle of the Lord you shall mention no more. For every man’s word will be his oracle, for you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God.* Every man’s word will be his oracle or the KJV says burden. This means that every man will be called to account for his words and what he claims is from the Lord. If he profanes or perverts the word, he will answer severely. Jesus tells us the same thing in Matthew 12:36-37 *But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.****37****For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

Verse 37 *Thus you shall say to the prophet, ‘What has the Lord answered you?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’*This verse repeats verse 35 except that in verse 35, men were speaking to one another. Now they are speaking to the prophet as well. When we speak of the Lord and His Truth and His Love, we are to speak simply and without hypocrisy. The goal is understanding and worship of God, not worship of the pastor.

Verse 38 *But since you say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Because you say this word, “The oracle of the Lord!” and I have sent to you, saying, “Do not say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’* God now says that, though He told the false prophets not to use the term the oracle of the lord, they have continued to say it, so they sound more important and high handed. God will punish them for this. When God says stop it, He means stop it.

Verse 39 *therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you and forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and will cast you out of My presence.* This has the meaning of Therefore, behold I take you and cast you down, dashing you to the ground. This is speaking of all Judah and in particular Jerusalem.

Verse 40 *And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.* The false prophets will have an everlasting reproach and perpetual shame upon their name. As Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 20:11 - *But the Lord is with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. Their everlasting confusion will never be forgotten.*

And so, we leave Jeremiah tonight with a greater understanding of what God requires of us. He requires that we speak in Truth, consistent with His Word, using simple and easy to understand words. Our purpose is always to bring Light and understanding, not the darkness of chaos and confusion. May we be beacons of Light, Truth shining in this sin darkened world. May God find us faithful in leading others to Christ, no matter the false teachings all around us.