***The Suffering Woman

RV151-02***

**The Jewish People**

Following the previous service, I went to the dedication of the new storefront of Irving Jewish Synagogue. 0.7% of the population of Irving is Jewish, and they have now brought together a synagogue for the Jewish people in this city. The name of it is the House of Faith. There was a gathering of about 50 people there. They included several representatives from the Irving City Council, and from the Irving Ministerial Alliance, who were on the program. In a Jewish synagogue, the prayers are spoken by a cantor who sings them. The cantor was there with his little skullcap on, and his beard. I think all cantors have to have beards. He sang the prayer in Hebrew, and then he translated it. His final words were, "O, God, in Thy mercy, answer me with Your saving faith."

I silently sat there and observed: "He already has revealed His saving faith to you." It is in Jesus Christ. But there was immediately demonstrated the age-old problem that the Jewish people face, and for which John, in the book of the Revelation, sees the woman, representing Israel, in great turmoil and agony, and personal suffering and pain, that John says is comparable to a woman giving birth to a child. The Jews are in this pain because they have rejected the grace salvation that God has offered by trusting in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Savior.

A Protestant minister, representing the Irving Ministerial Alliance, dedicated the synagogue in his comments to God's peace. I thought that it was kind of ironic that he should say that – to dedicate this organization such that they may enjoy God's peace, because they do not have the first basis upon which to come to peace, which is through Jesus, the Messiah. And I wondered what he would say about Romans 5:1 as he called for that peace: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (through Jesus, the Messiah).

A Presbyterian minister led in prayer. He prayed in various spiritual generalities, but very noticeably and obviously (he probably couldn't, because he felt like it would not be fitting) did not close his prayer on the authority of (in the name of) Jesus Christ. He did not call this blessing on the basis of Jesus the Messiah.

Then the Rabbi stood up, and the rabbi, in his remarks, observed that there are some differences between Christianity and Judaism. He observed, however, that in the most important area, Christians and Jews are agreed. And that is on the need for righteousness. And I almost said, "Amen," which is a good Hebrew response. However, my mind was going to what I thought he was referring to – the need for absolute righteousness for justification before God. Unless you have the same goodness that God has, which is absolute perfection, there is no way you can go to heaven. There's no way you can be justified in God's sight. There is no way where you can be, in God's sight, as if you had never sinned, which is what justification basically means.

My mind look for such righteousness as it can only be received through imputation to the believer in Jesus Christ who receives this absolute righteousness as a great gift from God. The rabbi, however, went on to explain the righteousness that he had in mind. Of course, I should have anticipated that this was the same concept of righteousness for which Paul wrote the book of Romans, and in which chapters 9 through 11, he specifically addressed the Jewish people, and said to them, "You have an idea of righteousness that is going to take you into heaven, and you're dead wrong. It's going to take you right into the lake of fire."

The rabbi went on to explain what he meant by righteousness, and it became evident that what he had in mind was works of mercy, which are being performed in the community: kindness; peace; consideration; helping the homeless; helping the hungry; helping those who need clothing; and, all the works of mercy that a human society means that needs. That's what he meant by righteousness.

My mind went to Romans 10:3-4 where Paul was speaking of the present condition of the Jewish people: "For not knowing about God's righteousness (His absolute righteousness that takes you into heaven), and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." I sat there thinking about the absolute righteousness of God that comes as a grace gift that takes you smack into heaven permanently and forever. He was thinking about a righteousness that he himself produced, and that he wants to lead his congregation to produce on the basis of works of mercy which will justify them in the eyes of God, and take them into heaven.

Verse 4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Paul was being very specific here – that what you do in terms of the works of law is not going to take you into heaven.

Well, on the schedule of weekly activities at the synagogue is Sunday school. For what purpose? To teach the children the Torah so that they may obey it for salvation. They had the Torah, which refers, as you know, to the first five books of the Bible – the books that Moses wrote. These are called the Mosaic Law. This is the most sacred part of the Bible to the Jewish people. And there, in a cabinet, they have a wrapped-up scroll of the five books of Moses, the Torah, in Hebrew. One of the first things I looked for was the little instrument that is in the form of a finger (a pointer). And sure enough, there it was, hanging by a chain on the end of the scroll because the Word of God is so sacred that when the scroll is unrolled for them to read out of it, in their services, they must not even touch it with their hand. They had this special pointer by which they follow the text as they read it.

The idea of achieving salvation by keeping what you read about in the Law of Moses is explicitly condemned in Romans 3:19: "We know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law (that is, the Jewish people); that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God, because by the works of the Law, no flesh will be justified in His sight, for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." The best thing the Ten Commandments can do for you is to show you how bad you are. But even if you kept the Ten Commandments perfectly, it wouldn't take you into heaven. Nobody gets into heaven by keeping laws and rules, because we're all born with the sin nature that automatically condemns us to hell.

Verse 21: "But now, apart from the Law, the righteousness of God (the absolute righteousness of God) has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus, for all those who believe, for there is no distinction."

So, as I sat there, as a gentile, my entrance into the heaven was not through the Torah stored in the case, and through obedience to its rules, nor was it the way for those Jews. For both of us, the way was through Jesus, the Messiah.

Verse 23: "For all, have sinned, and all fall short of the glory of God; being justified as a gift by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a satisfaction (a propitiation) in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed."

Since the time of Adam, God has been sending people to heaven, but their sins have not been paid for (up to the death of Christ). He was sending them on credit. He was saying that, as the righteous God, "Someday, you have trusted in the Savior to come, will cover the sins that have not been atoned for." And it's interesting that the first reason for the crucifixion of Christ was not so we would be saved, but so that God's integrity would be demonstrated. The Father put the Son there, first of all, to demonstrate His Own holiness – that He is keeping His Word to provide for the salvation of those who have depended on him.

Verse 26: "For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness, at the present time, that He might be just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." How simple – to justify a person who does nothing more than trust in Jesus! "Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law."

But the Jewish children will now be attending their Sunday school classes. As I looked at their little simple facilities that they have built in this storefront operation, I said to my daughter-in-law, "This looks like the old days at Berean Church, when we started over in the academy building. We just had that first floor, and it was very rugged and some of the sheet rock wasn't finished." But their objective is to teach their children the Torah.

The benediction was pronounced by a woman rabbi, in which she thanked God for His care. She thanked God for the Torah, which has carried the Jews through times of great suffering. She thanked God for the new synagogue, which has been organized in Irving, for them to rear their children as a new generation of Jews waiting for the Messiah.

It was very hard for me not to say, "Madam Rabbi, He has arrived. You are looking in vain for a Messiah that has already come."

There was a special vocalist. He was a good singer. He sat on a stool, and had a guitar. I notice that anybody who plays a guitar always sits on a stool. They seem to go together. And he sang several songs. His last song was titled Next Year It's Going to be Better. It was an old Jewish Folk song. But I kept saying, "No, it won't be. Next year for the Jewish people, it's only going to be worse.

I was privileged to view this whole synagogue enterprise as these sincere people were trying to organize their life under Judaism, to reach out to the God that they know is there, and that they do respect, and whose Torah they honor. It is an enterprise in futility through spiritual blindness. Are they nice people? Yes, they are very nice. The rabbi sought me out, and I had a very interesting conversation with him. Somehow, he had gotten wind of me, and asked how I was. And somebody said, "Well, there he is – right there." So, we had an interesting chat.

I had been looking through his songbook, and I said to him, "Here it is, isn't it – the Shammah?" It was in English, and it was in Hebrew, and I read the top in Hebrew. It said, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." There is no other God. There is no one else who speaks for Him. I said, "Only in the Torah, the inerrant Word of God, do we have the truth." He said, "Yes." But he said, "You know, in Judaism, we have the Orthodox Jews, which are very conservative." He said, "Are you a fundamentalist?" And I admitted that I was. I said, "By that I mean, I believe that when God speaks in the Bible, He really means it, and he doesn't give us any fake words. He doesn't kid us. He doesn't give us any lies. It's true." He said, "Well, we have the Orthodox, and then we have the reform up here, these liberals." That's where that lady rabbi came from – from Dallas, the liberals. He didn't say that – I'm saying that. Then he said, "In between, you have these conservatives." He said, "We're the conservatives, and we have to be here to try to draw the crowd."

What he was saying was, "If we were to try to be orthodox, and be very explicit with the Word of God, and say, 'No nonsense about it,' we wouldn't be able to get these 30 families together." He was telling me that he has already had to adapt to the way they live, and their views on religious matters must be incorporated."

"Next year, it's going to be better." What an exercise in futility for those who know the truth of the Word of God.

In Romans 2:17, the apostle Paul says, "But if you bear the name Jew, and rely upon the Law, and boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law (out of the Torah), and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind: a light to those who are in darkness; a corrector of the foolish; and, a teacher of the immature), having in the law the embodiment of the knowledge and truth; you therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? They have the very Law of God, and they have all the explicit predictions and prophecies concerning Jesus, the Messiah, that He fulfilled so explicitly. He fulfilled them in such detail, that when they look at Psalm 22, and they read about this explicit agony of someone dying upon a cross, written 800 years before Christ came, it is such an agony to the rabbis that they say, "That does not apply to the Messiah. That applies to the Jewish nation that has suffered over the years." And that is completely violating the very words of that psalm.

Notice Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and, circumcision is that which is of the heart by the Spirit, not by the letter, and his praise is not from men, but from God." The Jews count on the fact, to this very day, that any male child that is not circumcised is not going to heaven. The Word of God says that the circumcision that counts is the circumcision spiritually of your heart that comes from trusting in Christ the Savior.

Well, the dedication program was followed by a kosher lunch. They had lox; fish; little salmon fillets; and, bagels. They announced beforehand that it was all kosher food. In their program, they indicated that the luncheon followed all dietary laws of Moses. All of the dietary laws were observed. So, I felt easy eating it. I wanted to go by the table and say, "Do you have any ham here today?" But I restrained myself from trying to make a big hit with them. But they had strictly kosher food. There were no regulations on the pastries. I mean, the blintzes were there, and the cheesecakes were there, and took a long time to get out of there. Anyhow, it was a delightful luncheon, but all of this is part of the system to get to heaven. All of this is part of the system to try to survive in a world that hates the Jews.

I could not help but noticing, even in the lady rabbi's prayer, how she kept reminiscing of the sufferings of the people, and of the agonies of the people. The president of the synagogue got up and expressed their appreciation for living in a country like the United States that gives them freedom to worship their own way, and to practice their own religious customs. You were very much under the awareness that they are aware that, because they are Jews, they're under the gun.

**John's Vision of God's Temple in Heaven**

This is exactly what we've seen here in Revelation 12. John sees a vision of God's temple in heaven with the holy of holies open to all believers. God is about to bring the kingdom of man on earth under the antichrist to a termination. God will return His Jewish people to a place of blessing. So, the ark of the covenant appears in heaven, because He is going to bring about that blessing as the result of what was done in tearing open the veil, and satisfying the righteousness and the justice of God there at the ark of the covenant with the blood of Christ.

The disruptions in nature that we read about are an ominous mood, signaling the imminent termination of the antichrist's government. The spirit of the New Age movement today is in full gear, rejecting the concept of a personal Creator God; rejecting that Jesus, His Son, is the only way into eternal life; and, rejecting the Bible as God's Word to mankind.

**The New World Order**

There is a new world order of peace, prosperity, and brotherhood that is being pursued under the auspices of the United Nations. That's the "in" thing right now. John sees a woman in the sky symbolizing the nation Israel. She has the appearance of being wrapped in the sun; standing on the moon; and, a crown with 12 stars. As we match that to the Old Testament dream of Joseph, we see that the sun represented the father, Jacob; the moon, the mother Rachel; and, the 12 stars, the 12 sons of Jacob, which became the 12 patriarchs from which came the 12 Tribes of Israel.

**The Woman**

This woman is in the state of suffering – suffering as one who is about to give birth to a child. This concept of suffering compared to childbirth is used in the Bible elsewhere. I remind you that we interpret the book of the Revelation by comparing it to other Scriptures. Isaiah 21:3-4: "For this reason, my loins are full of anguish. Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor. I am so bewildered, I cannot hear; so terrified, I cannot see. My mind reels. Horror overwhelms me. The twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling." Here is the picture of somebody who is in agony (in fear), compared to the painfulness of childbirth.

Well, for Israel, the pain was the result of producing the Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ. She is hated for that. For Israel, the pain was for rejecting that Savior Jesus Christ. For Israel, there is pain because they were the channel of producing the Word of God, which people hate. Israel has brought suffering indeed upon herself as the unfaithful wife of Jehovah.

However, it is important to remember also that Israel is the one that has been chosen by God. I reminded you in the previous session that all of you are born into the Christian life with certain capacities; certain abilities; and, certain spiritual gifts to exercise. It is important that you realize that you have a particular spiritual gift in a particular way to be used in a particular context, and nobody else can substitute for you. You're the one that has to do that. I am trying to caution you that it is easy to get trapped, and to get caught up in all the burdens of your life; all the objectives; and, all the purposes that you would like to realize, and forget that you are a chosen person with a chosen ability, and you've got a little bit of time of life to execute it.

The other day, I was thinking about that, and Matthew 23:23 came to my mind as a principle that we forget. And I thought I ought to remind you of it: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees: hypocrites. For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Law: justice, and mercy, and faithfulness. But these (the weightier matters of the Law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness) are things you should have done, but without neglecting the tithing of the mint, the dill, and the coming." The Pharisees had become so legalistic and so precise in giving a tenth of all they possessed (which was imposed upon them under the Mosaic Law), that they sat down and were counting the seeds. They were counting the little mint seeds, the little dill seeds, and the little cumin seeds – everything that they possessed. They were putting it out: one for God, nine for me; one for God, and nine for me.

God doesn't condemn them for doing that. This was part of their economic system. This is how they wanted to operate with God. These were the things they were pursuing in life. It is interesting that here is the principle: "These things you should have done." What ambition do you have in life? What goal are you pursuing? What job are you seeking? What business venture are you trying to be successful in? What plan do you have? What do you have immediately in your future? God says, "You should have done that, and that's OK. But while you are doing that, have you forgotten that you are chosen with a special spiritual gift? You are a gifted person spiritually in some respects to perform for God. Have you neglected the most important thing? You should not neglect your ambitions. You should not neglect your objectives in life. But don't let that trap you into doing the things of God's work.

You are not on this earth, first of all, to meet those objectives and ambitions of life. That is just secondary to help you do the thing you *are* here for – your mission, the cross that you are to bear as Christ bore His cross in His mission to die for the sins of the world.

Israel had a mission. She was called to a specific purpose in the plan of God, but she never could get it together. Through the centuries, the Jews kept forgetting who they were. They kept forgetting the laws of God, and the Torah that they had been given to guide them.

So, they found it easy to worship idol gods, and then to perform the immoral religious rituals along with that worship. Satan certainly encouraged that apostasy in the hopes that God would become so angry that He would destroy them, so that there could be no Savior through the line of Israel, and no Millennial Kingdom of Jews in their normal human bodies on earth.

**Jeremiah**

One of the places in the Bible that, in a very sobering way, portrays for us the downward path that the Jewish people followed, and which we are imitating in this country today, is in Jeremiah 1. Jeremiah is called "the weeping prophet" because he shed so many tears over what he saw the people of Israel doing. Let's spot-check a few passages, just in the early part of this book, to give you a sense of what the Jews were doing, and why John sees this woman in heaven, the nation of Israel, under intense suffering and in intense personal agony. And if there's anything true about the Jew today, it's that.

In Jeremiah 1:14, Jeremiah himself is called to a thankless task: "Then the Lord said to me out of the north, 'The evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land.'" He's referring to Babylon. Babylon is on its way to conquer the nation of Israel: "'For behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the North,' declares the Lord, 'and they will come, and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about, and against all the cities of Judah.'" They're going to come down and they're going to lay siege to this city: "And I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me, and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands." That's hard to understand. It's very hard to put yourself in the place of someone who would make an idol and then proceed to worship it.

"'Now gird up your loins, and arise, and speak to them, Jeremiah, all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, lest I dismay you before them. Now, behold, I have made you today as a fortified city, and as a pillar of iron, and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princesses, to its priests, and to the people of the land. And they will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,' declares the Lord."

Now that is a thankless task: to be called by God to a mission of failure; and, to be called by God to speak to a people that, right off the bat, the Lord says, "They're not going to listen to you, and they're going to treat you like a dog. The fact is that they are going to try to kill you. But I'm going to tell you that I'm going to protect you. I want you to get out there, and you deliver the message."

Notice Jeremiah 2:26-28. The Jews are brazenly worshiping idol gods: "As the thief is shamed when he is discovered, so the house of Israel is shamed. They, their kings, their princesses, and their priests and their prophets, who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth,' for they have turned their back on Me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble, they will say, 'Arise and save us.' But where are your gods which you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can, and save you in the time of your trouble. For according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah."

Here, again, it's hard to imagine a people who look to a tree and say, "Hi Daddy," and worship the thing. They look to a piece of stone that they've made a face out of, and they say, "Oh, great stone face, how I thank you for creating me." I think even my second-graders would sense that that's dumb. I think my kindergarten kids would think that that's dumb.

Then God gets kind of sarcastic here. He says, "When they get in trouble, though, they're not going to go to the tree and to the stone. They're going to come back to Me. Then I'm going to say, 'Fellows, where are you gods, boys? Go talk to them. Let them save you.'" Then God says, "You have got plenty of them. Every city in Judah has its own special god that you have made. You have lots to choose from."

When you turn your back upon the mission of God for you as a selected chosen one, and for a lifestyle of godliness, there comes a time when God quits fooling around with you. You go beyond the point of no return, and He walks off, and He leaves you in what you're pursuing. Then, when the roof falls in, there's no one there to carry you through.

In Jeremiah 3:12, God very graciously tells the Jews that He will restore them to blessing if they'll repent and come back to Him: "Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say, 'Return faithless Israel,' declares the Lord. 'I will not look upon you in anger, for I am gracious,' declares the Lord. 'I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity (just confess) that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree. And you have not obeyed my voice,' declares the Lord. 'Return, O faithless sons,' declares the Lord. 'For I am a master to you, and I will take you, one from the city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.'"

With that kind of a gracious offer, you would think that their hearts would have been softened, and they would have repented and returned. They did not.

In Jeremiah 4:22, God pronounces the evil conduct of the Jews to be stupid, because it brings so much grief: "For my people are foolish. They do not know me. They are stupid children, and they have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good, they do not know." What a verse! They are very shrewd in doing evil. In this world, people often respect you because you're shrewd to do evil. But God says, "You're stupid if you know how to do evil, but you do not know how to do good," meaning to obey the Word of God.

One of the worst things associated with Baal worship was that you violated a fundamental law of God – perhaps one of the most fundamental laws that God has ever declared, and that is sexual immorality. In Jeremiah 5:7-9, God says, "'Why should I pardon you? Your sons have forsaken Me, and sworn by those who are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery, and trooped to the harlot's house. They were well-fed, lusty horses, each one neighing after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish these people?' declares the Lord. 'And on a nation such as this, shall I not avenge myself?'"

There's the principle. A nation may say, "Yes, sex outside of marriage is OK." When a nation permits that to be portrayed as acceptable conduct, and it's dignified, and everybody treats it lightly, God says, "I'm going to avenge Myself on that nation." That is the first step of the downward path to national destruction.

I cannot help but wonder if the reason that the United States does not appear in prophetic Scriptures is because it indeed does is a nonentity nation, and if that does not happen as a result of the violation of the sexual moral code of the Word of God.

God warned the Jews that if they persisted, they would suffer foreign conquest. Jeremiah 5:15-17: "'Behold, I'm bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel,' declares the Lord. 'It is an enduring nation. It is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know: Babylon; nor, can you understand what they say. Their quiver is like an open grave. All of them are mighty men." Every time they pull an arrow out of their quiver, you're dead. "And they will devour your harvest and your food. They will devour your sons and your daughters. They will devour your flocks and your herds. They will devour your vines and your fig trees. They will demolish with the sword your fortified cities in which you trust.'"

Please remember that, at the time that God said this, none of this had yet happened. They were living in happy family associations. They were living in prosperity. They had their vines; they had their fig trees; and, they were trusting in their fortified cities. Then, here comes this preacher who says, "I have a message for God. While you are having this good life; you're living high on the hog; and, you're really enjoying your immoralities, God is sending a power from the North that's going to destroy this city. It's going to tear down this temple. It's going to take your sons and daughters, and literally eat them up."

You would say, "How could they have come to such a degraded position? Where were the preachers? Where were the teachers of the word? What were they doing? Why didn't they listen to their preachers?"

Well, take a look at Jeremiah 5:30-31: "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land. The prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority. And My people love it so, but what will you do at the end of it?" The spiritual leaders were a bunch of fakes – a bunch of con men. They were telling the people what they wanted to hear, and they were giving messages from God which were not coming from God. The messages that they were giving them were telling them that what they were doing was all right, and that they should not worry about this alarmist, Jeremiah, who was talking about this power from the North: "It's never going to happen." And the people loved it.

Mind you, the verse that Paul, in speaking to Timothy, says, "In the end time, people will not listen to preachers with sound doctrine. But what they will want to listen to are preachers who scratch their ears." Did you ever have an itch on your back someplace, and your wife says, "Please scratch my back," and you scratch it? She says, "Left. Up. Angle down. Right. Up. Oh, that's it. You've got it. Stay there. That's right on it. That's it. Oh, that feels so good when you scratch it. Oh, keep it up."

What does Paul say that you scratch it with? With your vileness; with your false doctrine; and, with your contamination: "I just love to hear you talk like that." The preachers are doing it. Is it any wonder the people are acting in this way? And their eyes are not on God. They're on earthly things (temporal things), so their greed has taken over.

Remember that I'm trying to give you a picture of why this woman is suffering. You wouldn't think, being so dear to God, after all, that she would be suffering. He says, "This woman is the apple of My eye – the very pupil of My eye." The most sensitive thing about an eye is that center pupil – that thing that you protect most of all, and they're treating Him like this?

Jeremiah 6:10-15: "'To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear. Behold, their ears are closed, and they cannot listen. Behold, the Word of the Lord has become a reproach to them. They have no delight in it. But I am full of the wrath of the Lord. I am weary with holding it in. Pour it out on the children in the streets, and on the gathering of young men together. For both husband and wife shall be taken; the aged and the very old. And their houses shall be turned over to others, their fields and their wives together. For I will stretch out My hand against the inhabitants of the land,' declares the Lord. 'For from the least of them, even to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain. And from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely." You can't even trust the religious leaders in business deals. Every one of them is greedy for gain.

"And they have healed the brokenness of my people superficially, saying, 'Peace, peace,' but there is no peace." Some of the people felt uneasy about this. Some of the people said, "This doesn't seem right. You know, Jeremiah is not a bad guy. We've had no evidence that Jeremiah is a treacherous liar. Why are we ignoring him, and pushing him around like this?" And the false teacher says, "Don't bother yourself. Listen to me. Believe me. Peace is what we're going to enjoy. Trust me. There's nobody coming from the North to disturb us. There's nobody who is going to take us into foreign captivity. Peace is what we're going to have.

Verse 15: "'Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done (these spiritual leaders)? They were not even the same at all. They do not even know how to blush. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be cast down,' says the Lord."

The lowest level to which a human being can sink is when you no longer can feel ashamed of what is crude, and obscene, and disgraceful, and immoral. This is what this nation had come to. They didn't even blush in the presence of the vileness and the crudeness.

We have filthy movies that must exist in the theaters today, by every account and report that you get of them. How can a young man take a young lady friend, and sit in that vileness without blushing? Well, they must sit there by the hundreds, without any intimidation over the vileness that is being portrayed. They're not even embarrassed in each other's presence.

The Jews had so little respect for God that they took their gross living into His temple – the very temple itself. Jeremiah 7:8-11: "Behold, you're trusting in the deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal, and walk after other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered,' that you may do all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight?" This is the verse that Jesus quoted.

"'Behold, I, even I have seen it,' declares the Lord." Here are these hypocrites practicing the vilest kind of life, but then they come to church on Sunday morning, and they sing the praises of God, and they move around among the people of God, because we don't know what you've been doing. We don't know what you've been thinking. We don't know what you have been engaged in. But that's not important. The important thing is that God knows.

I remember being at an event with a man one time, and everyone was ordering some drinks, and the wine was flowing. I didn't have any problem about not filling my glass, and this man that I was with said, "Ah, go ahead. You're away from home. Nobody will know it." And I said, "I'll know it. More importantly, God will know it."

These people had lost so much orientation to reality that for them, God wasn't even out there watching. They live vile lives, and then they moved in among the people of God to practice their religious performances and rituals as the people of God.

It was bad enough that they would listen to these false teachers. The worst thing is that they wouldn't listen to the true one.

Jeremiah 7:23-26: "But this what I commanded them saying, "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you will be my people, and you will walk in all the way which I commend you, that it may be well with you.' Yet, they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own council, and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. Since the day that your father's came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all my servants the prophets, daily rising early, and sending them. Yet, they did not listen to Me, or inclined their ear, but stiffened their necks. They did evil more than their fathers." Each generation was worse than the one before.

In Jeremiah 8:12: "'Were they ashamed because of the abominations that they had done? They certainly were not ashamed. They did not know how to blush. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall. At the time of their punishment, they shall be brought down,' declares the Lord." Here again, He reiterates their shamelessness.

The Jews were warned that it was not just going to be that they're going to have a military problem on their hands. In Jeremiah 9, God got very explicit and said, "I'm going to take you out of the land, and I'm going to scatter you into these nations." Jeremiah 9:13: "The Lord said, 'Because they have forsaken My Law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice nor walked according to it, but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart, and after the Baals as their fathers taught them, therefore,' thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will feed them, this people, with Wormwood, and give them poison water to drink, and I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them.'"

You can see why Johns sees a woman who is in great concern, agony, fear, and suffering. This is just one prophet. This is just one part of this book that we're looking at. It's just a smattering here and there, to give you the perspective of what the Jewish people did in bringing judgment and suffering upon themselves.

Finally, in Jeremiah 11, God says, "You're going to go to the point of no return." We don't think that God ever finally steps aside and says, "OK, go ahead. Jeremiah 11:9: "Then the Lord said to me, 'A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear My words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers. Therefore,' thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I am bringing disaster on them which they will not be able to escape. No, they will cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they surely will not save them in the time of disaster. For your gods are as many as your cities, O Judah, and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars that you have set up of these shameful things – altars to burn incense to Baal.'"

Finally, the Jews had had enough of Jeremiah. And they did what people do who don't want to listen to preachers who are telling them the straight scoop today. Jeremiah 11:21: "'Therefore,' thus says the Lord, concerning the men of Anathoth.'" This was the city from which Jeremiah came. This is where he was born: "Who seek your life saying, 'Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, that you must not die at our hands." Isn't that a nice way to handle a problem? He's telling them the messages of God. Jeremiah has never been proven wrong. He's never been shown to be a liar.

So, these men finally come and say, "Jeremiah, we're going to put it to you straight. You shut up; you stop telling us these bad things that are going to happen to us; and, you stop bugging us about your lifestyle, or we're going to kill you." The way to handle your rebellion is to silence the preacher. That happens to be exactly what people do today. Fortunately, they don't knock off the guys in the pulpit, but what they do is go to another, or they don't show up for church. When they get irritated by what they hear, they silence the preacher by staying at home. They silence the principal by going someplace else. That is exactly what these stupid people we're doing here.

The results are predictable. The Jews suffered the same devastating eternal results as the person who does that today. If you are running from a true message of God, you are very stupid person, and the consequences will be dramatic for you. Verse 22: "'Therefore,' thus says Lord of hosts, 'Behold, I and about to punish them. The young men will die by the sword; their sons and daughters will die by famine, and the remnant will not be left for them. For I will bring disaster on the men of Anathoth – the year of their punishment.'" These men were threatening the life of Jeremiah. They were going wipe him out of memory, so to speak. But God says, "I'm going to wipe their names out of memory." We don't know who these men were, but we do remember Jeremiah's name. The Jews had the Old Testament Scriptures, so there was no excuse for being deceived by false leaders.

Jeremiah 14:10-16: "O, but Lord, what do you mean that I don't have any reward? I followed Oral Roberts religiously. I listened to Bob Tilton every day. I sent in my seed money all the time. How can you say that?" Well, they're con men: "But I didn't know that, Lord. I thought that they were real. My heart was in the right place." But they were con men: "But how would I know that, Lord?" Well, you have the Word of God: "Well, are you going to hold me responsible for knowing that it's in the Bible?"

Jeremiah 14:10: "Thus says the Lord to the people, 'Even so, they have loved to wander. That have not kept their feet in check. Therefore, the Lord does not accept them. Now He will remember their iniquity, and call their sins to account.' So the Lord said to me, 'Do not pray for the welfare of this people.'" There is a time when you stop praying for a person: "When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry. And when they off burnt offerings and grain offerings, I'm not going to accepted them. Rather, I'm going to make an end of them by the sword, famine, and pestilence.'"

"But I said, 'Oh, Lord God, behold, the prophets are telling them, 'You will not see a sword, nor will you have famine; on the contrary, I will give you lasting peace in this place.'" Even Jeremiah said, "But Lord, they're only listening to the religious leaders. They're sincere."

Verse 14: "Then the Lord said to me, 'The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them, nor commanded them, nor spoken to them. They are prophesying to you a false vision: divination; futility; and, the deception of their own minds. Therefore,' thus says the Lord concerning the prophets that are prophesying in My name. 'Although it was not I who sent them, yet they keep saying, 'There shall be no sword of famine in this land. By sword and famine those prophets shall meet their end.'" God says, "Yes, they have been given false information. But they should have had the discernment to discern between those people and the true prophet Jeremiah. The people also, to whom they were prophesying, will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword, and there will be no one to bury them, neither them, nor their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters, for I shall pour out their own wickedness on them.'"

God says that you are responsible if you listen to a false teacher. And here these people are going to be thrown out so that the result will be that no one will even bury them. The dog and the bird will eat them.

We close with Jeremiah 23:16. The Jews will not listen to the preachers of God's Word, but they will listen to the con men and to the liars. And for that, God will hold them responsible, and there will be great suffering upon the nation of Israel: "Thus says the Lord God, 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility. They speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord.'"

How many times have you heard a TV preacher say, "God spoke to me last night? I saw this listen. I heard the voice of the Lord." And people rush to listen to what God has to say: "'They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The Lord has said, 'You will have peace.' And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.' But who has stood in the council of the Lord, that he should see and hear His Word? Who has given heed to His Word and listened? Behold, the storm of the Lord has gone forth in wrath, even a whirling tempest. It will swirl down on the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart. In the last days, you will clearly understand it. I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied. But if they had stood in My council, they would have announced My words to My people, and would have turned them back from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds. Am I a God who is near?' declares the Lord. 'And not a God far off. Can a man hide himself in a hiding place so that I do not see him?' declares the Lord. 'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?' declares the Lord.

"I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, 'I had a dream! I had a dream.' How long Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart, who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal? The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My Word speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?' declares the Lord. 'Is My Word not like fire?' declares the Lord, 'and like a hammer which shatters the rock?

"'Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets,' declares the Lord, 'who steal My words from each other. Behold, I am against the prophets,' declares the Lord, 'who use their tongues and declare, 'The Lord declares.' Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams,' declares the Lord, 'and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting. Yet, I did not send them nor command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,' declares the Lord."

Yes, you are responsible for what you believe. You are responsible for the people that you trust to guard you spiritually.

The people of Israel brought great suffering upon themselves because they simply would not obey God.

So, when John looks up and sees this woman in the stars, representing the nation of Israel, in great personal agony and suffering, it is because of this. Later in the book of Jeremiah, we have the sad picture where they finally get fed up with Jeremiah, and they do take them, and they throw him into a pit (into a cistern-like pit), full of mud; full of slimy creatures; and, full of dirty things. And here sits God's man. This is the treatment they gave him because he spoke the truth of the living God.

Is it any wonder that, to this very day, the descendants of those people, even though they still reach up to the true and live God, are a people are suffering? May we learn from their example. There is no escaping the consequences of negative volition to the Word of God. It will destroy you every time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1990

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