

JEREMIAH: SHINING AS SPIRITUAL TWILIGHT FALLS
"Part IV: God's Insurance When Countered By Errant Teachers"
(Jeremiah 27-28)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

What happens when the person who asserts the **right** position is outshone by advocates who teach error? How can the truth win?

(1) Sylvia Baker, a young Christian in Australia, attended an A-level zoology course in secondary school where she was taught evolution was a fact. It had allegedly occurred with the processes of mutation and natural selection.

When she went on to the University of Sussex and studied biology for three years, again she was bombarded with the idea that evolution is a fact.

In time she got to the point where Sylvia realized Christianity and evolution were incompatible. The origin of death differed in both systems of thought: Christianity named sin as its source in 1 Corinthians 15:21 where evolution made death a part of nature's origins, a necessity for the survival of the fittest in evolutionary processes.

However, Sylvia had no grounds to retain her faith in Christ as all she knew from her exposure to education was a belief in evolution.

How can a believer bombarded with just one side of a viewpoint, the WRONG one, ever come to the TRUTH?

(2) A few years ago, a believer I know was asked if he would condone the marriage of a Christian woman to a Christian man who had been divorced. This case was unusual: the man wanting to remarry was an ordained minister, and 92 fellow ministers in his Evangelical denomination approved of his being remarried! So, keeping the stand meant this believer stood "alone" in a 92-to-1 odds!

Well, the believer kept his stand while the couple opted to go with the majority opinion! They thought, "Well, it's just one Christian's opinion against 92 other reputable Evangelical ministers -- **sure we might not have been allowed to remarry a generation ago**, but it is just one believer's view in *contemporary* times, and times change, so the **numbers** involved defend the position for us to remarry!"

How could this believer's position be seen as credible when the odds of *significant current* opinion were 92-to-1 against him?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Either I or another who has shared God's TRUTH has seen a competitor promote ERROR to hearers! What can the hearers do to discern which teacher is giving the truth, and how should the one who teaches the truth RESPOND constructively to this challenge?!"

- I. **A COMPETITION existed between God's TRUE, TRUTH-telling prophet, Jeremiah and the FALSE, LYING prophets of Judah:**
 - A. God ordered His **true** prophet, Jeremiah to predict Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar would **dominate** the nations; thus, Jeremiah was to call all men **willingly** to **submit** to Babylon or suffer God's punishment in having Babylon destroy them by an invasion, Jeremiah 27:5-7.
 - B. However, spurred on by **secular** events, **false** prophets promoted just the **opposite** position advocated by Jeremiah's message from God:
 1. A year before the events of Jeremiah 27, secular records report a failed coup against king Nebuchadnezzar, B.K.C., O.T. p. 1164.
 2. This followed Nebuchadnezzar's initial excursion into Judah when he had taken some captives, including Judah's king, Jeconiah along with prized, holy temple furnishings, cf. Jeremiah 28:3-4 implied.
 3. Well, spurred on by what **humanly appeared** to be **weakness** in Nebuchadnezzar, **false** prophets tried to encourage the people of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar would fall, and the captives and temple furnishing that had been confiscated would be restored, 27:16 et al.
 4. **Thus, they promoted a spirit of REBELLION instead of SUBMISSION in relating to Babylon's king**, Jer. 27:17 implied.
 - C. Jeremiah was then left countering the false teachings of these false prophets who countered the message God had given him to preach about **submitting** to Babylon's king Nebuchadnezzar, Jer. 27:8, 17.
- II. **This COMPETITION between TRUTHFUL Jeremiah and the FALSE prophets came to a head in a REVEALING confrontation:**
 - A. A false prophet named Hananiah one day stood up in the temple before the nation and Jeremiah, and went out of his way to **contradict** the predictions God had given through Jeremiah, Jeremiah 28:1-4:
 1. To promote their need to submit to Babylon, God had Jeremiah make wooden yokes as object lessons for the nations, Jer. 27:1-8.
 2. Yet, focusing on this "yoke" theme, Hananiah countered Jeremiah:
 - a. In the temple before Judah and Jeremiah (28:1), Hananiah said Israel's God would **destroy** Babylon's **yoke** in **two years**, 28:2-3.

- b. He claimed this deliverance would include the restoration of Judah's captured king and other captives coupled with the return of the valuable confiscated temple furnishings, Jeremiah 28:3-4.
 3. So, at every point, this declaration countered Jeremiah's prophecies!
- B. Jeremiah's **response in part** indicated he was God's true prophet:
 1. Instead of becoming defensive at this public personal slam by Hananiah, Jeremiah said a hearty "Amen" as a desire that such a restoration would mean so much comfort in Judah, Jeremiah 28:6.
 2. Yet, Jeremiah warned Hananiah's declaration was not true, and gave evidence of it in the record of **past reputable** prophets who called for Judah's destruction for its sins, Jeremiah 28:7-8.
 3. Thus, only **TIME** would prove if Jeremiah and the other godly prophets of old **or** men like Hananiah were from God, Jer. 28:9.
 4. Hananiah then openly insulted Jeremiah by breaking the wooden yoke God had made Jeremiah wear as a sign (28:10-11b); instead of becoming defensive, Jeremiah merely walked away, leaving with **God** this sacrilege of what was **GOD'S** prediction to him, 28:11c.
- C. **God** then stepped up to **expose** Hananiah's error with **personal** judgment because Hananiah had promoted rebellion against **GOD**:
 1. **God** sent Jeremiah to say Hananiah's promotion of unbelief against God's words **through** Jeremiah would be countered by **God**, 28:12.
 - a. **God** warned **Hananiah** that his breaking Jeremiah's yoke would result in **God's** putting an **iron** yoke on these nations, 28:13-14.
 - b. Since opposing Jeremiah's words had left Hananiah countering **GOD** in making Judah trust in the **lie** that Babylon would fall in **two years**, Hananiah would **himself die THAT YEAR!** (28:16)
 2. Hananiah then died in **two MONTHS**, a fitting **sign** to counter his **errant** prediction of Babylon's fall in **two years**, Jer. 28:1; 28:17!

Application: (1) To **DISCERN true from false teachers, believe on Christ and become indwelt by God's discerning Spirit, Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27.** (2) Then, identify true teachers as (a) being nondefensive, (b) as aligning in content with **PAST, reputable teachings** and (c) having **TIME** prove them right (1 Tim. 5:22-25). (3) We can identify **FALSE** teachers as (a) insulters (b) who depart from past credible teachings, as (c) those whom God judges for sin and (d) those who are seen in **time to err!** (4) As a teacher of truth, (a) we must not become defensive if countered, but (b) let **GOD** handle the opposition (c) and just **keep proclaiming the RIGHT position.**

Lesson: **GOD** has a vested interest in the advance of His **OWN TRUTH**, so His messengers who give **HIS truth** and who face false opponents **TO** that truth need only give out God's truth and leave the results with **GOD.**

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

(1) In our introduction, I mentioned a believer's making a stand that he could not agree to the wedding of a couple due to divorce in their background. The believer took this stand even if the groom was ordained and had 92 other reputable Evangelical ministers backing up his choice to remarry. Well, after taking that stand, the believer recalled 1 Kings 22:1-40: there a godly prophet predicted **against** Ahab's **400** false prophets that Ahab would be killed if he went to Ramoth-Gilead. Indeed, Ahab **died** as he **alone** had predicted!

Other pastors agreed with his stand, making him further encouraged to stick to his view!

Time has changed things: the divorced minister remarried and tried to get back into a ministry! However, the 92 ministers who **condoned** his remarriage have since **refused** to let him **minister**, citing as grounds his **marital record!** Now this remarried man is disillusioned with those 92 ministers while the believer who had stood against the remarriage from the start can **keep** his stand without embarrassment!

(2) As for Sylvia Baker who faced the temptation of giving up her faith to adopt evolution, God reached her **in an evolution** seminar.

One day at this seminar, the lecturer asked the audience how the vertebrate eye might have evolved. Due to the complexity of this eye, the group was unable to answer. Baker writes, "All the specialized and complex cells that make up our eyes are supposed to have evolved because of advantageous mutations in some more simple cells that were there before. But what use is a hole in the front of the eye to allow light to pass through, if there are no cells to receive the light? What use is a lens forming an image if there is no nervous system to interpret that image? How could a visual nervous system have evolved before there was an eye to give it information?" (**Bone of Contention**, p. 19). Finally, Sylvia suggested, "Perhaps it did **not** evolve?" The lecturer and delegates turned against her, but it was the start of Sylvia's turn to adhere to Biblical creationism!

GOD makes His messengers "believable" so they need just give out His truth! (2) We HEARERS must pay ATTENTION to the SIGNALS of TRUTH God sends us to discern true teachings!