

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH
III. Insight From God's Contrast Of Spiritual Ministries
(Jeremiah 3:15; 5:30-31)

I. Introduction

- A. God called Jeremiah to minister in the Kingdom of Judah during its spiritual decline until God's judgment fell in the form of the Babylonian invasion and captivity. Jeremiah's spiritual ministry is then similar to what God's servants face in our current era of spiritual decline in the last part of Church History.
- B. We thus view God's contrast of spiritual ministries in Jeremiah 3:15 and 5:30-31 for insight and edification:

II. Insight From God's Contrast Of Spiritual Ministries, Jeremiah 3:15; 5:30-31.

- A. In Jeremiah 5:30-31, God described the intolerable state of Judah's spiritual ministries in Jeremiah's time:
 - 1. The Lord announced that an appalling and horrible thing had occurred in the land, Jeremiah 5:30.
 - 2. That awful thing was a complete breakdown of righteous order in spiritual ministries, Jeremiah 5:31:
 - a. First, the prophets were prophesying *sheqer*, "falsity," concepts that were false and possibly resulting from self-deception, Jeremiah 5:31a (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 1055).
 - b. Second, the priests were ruling "on their own hand," a figurative expression for ruling by their own authority instead of depending on the authority of God as expressed in Scripture, Jeremiah 5:31b.
 - c. Third, the people loved this arrangement where the prophets predicted falsity or prophesied out of self-deception and the priests ruled by their own authority and not in subjection to God, Jeremiah 5:31c.
 - 3. This situation contrasted greatly with godly spiritual ministries (as follows):
 - a. God had called the prophets to minister His truth, and the people were to test to see if the prophets were true prophets of the Lord by having all their prophecies be accurately fulfilled, Deuteronomy 18:18-22.
 - b. God had called the priests to sense their accountability to the Lord, to stand in awe of the Name of the Lord so as to teach people the truth of the authoritative Word of God as God's messengers, Malachi 2:4-7.
 - c. God had called the people of Israel to examine the prophets for their teachings relative to God, and if they found any prophet or priest directing them to depart from the Lord for false gods, the people were to have that spiritual leader executed, Deuteronomy 13:1-5.
- B. In contrast, the Lord predicted the godly spiritual ministry in Israel's Messianic Kingdom, Jeremiah 3:15:
 - 1. In Jeremiah 3:15, God predicted that in the future Messianic Kingdom, He would give His people spiritual shepherds after His own heart, shepherds who would minister the way God wanted them to serve.
 - 2. Such spiritual shepherds would "feed" (*ra'ah*, Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 708; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 944-945) His people "knowledge" (*de'ah*, Ibid., p. 395) and "insight, understanding" (Hiphil inf. absolute of *sakal*, "to have insight, comprehension," Ibid., p. 968).
 - 3. The "feeding" here clearly means teaching spiritual truths from God's Word, what Jesus did: When he saw the crowds of people in Israel who were as sheep having no shepherd, He felt compassion for them and began to teach them many things, Matthew 9:36 with Mark 6:34.
 - 4. This ministry will involve several things in contrast to the intolerable spiritual state in Jeremiah 5:31:
 - a. It will involve subordinates being submissive to divine authority as taught in Scripture.
 - b. It will involve subordinates who long for the truth and do not tolerate spiritual error in their leaders.
 - c. It will involve shepherds who revere the Lord so as to submit to and to obey His Word,
 - d. It will involve shepherds who dare not proclaim falsehood, but who teach God's truths in Scripture.
 - e. It will also involve shepherds who have the discernment to avoid self-deception, and who long for the truth of the Lord in the Holy Spirit's power and leading. (John 16:13-14)

Lesson: *In Jeremiah's time of declining spiritual health in Judah, there existed an awful state of the breakdown in authority and order in spiritual ministries, where God and His Word coupled with Bible exposition was replaced by self-promoting prophets and priests who taught mere human reasoning to the consent of the people. In contrast, during the Messianic Kingdom, there will be a complete subjection to God and His authoritative Word by human leaders and the people, with in-depth Bible exposition to the edifying of the people of God.*

Application: *(1) In our current era of spiritual decline that is so similar to that of Judah in Jeremiah's day, may we spiritual leaders revere and submit to Almighty God and thus expound His authoritative Word to the people of God for their edification. (2) May we God's people in the pew not be content with our spiritual leaders giving us human reasoning from the pulpit out of a lack of reverence for God, but long for God's expounded, authoritative Word.*