

FIGHTING AGAINST GOD.

– *DEC. 11.* – *JER. 36:20-32.* –

"The word of our God shall stand forever." – *Isa. 40:8.*

JEREMIAH prophesied in the days of Josiah and of his four successors, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. He was of about the same age as Josiah, and seems not to have been seriously ill-treated by that reformer: altho, as noted in our last lesson, he was passed by when the king sought heavenly counsel respecting the Book of the Law and the turning away of the penalties for sin therein recorded.

Jeremiah's position was a peculiarly trying one, for altho his prophesying evidently had a marked effect and greatly influenced the king and the princes and the people in cleansing the land of its idolatry and in reestablishing the worship of Jehovah, yet he was not permitted to compliment the people on these measurable reforms, and to promise them a return of divine favor, as did the false prophets of that time, and was considered unpatriotic. On the contrary, under the Lord's inspiration, he kept pointing out to Israel the flagrant sins of the past, and their natural tendency to leave the Lord and to follow other gods in idolatry. Under various pictures he represents Israel as wholly indifferent to the Lord's goodness of the past, wholly negligent of the covenant relationship entered into with him as a nation, except when they got into adversity, when their repentance would be but for a short time, and only from the selfish motive of desire to escape the troubles which their own course had brought upon them.

The Lord's messages, at the mouth of Jeremiah, practically held out no hope for a permanent return of divine favor in the near future; but on the contrary predicted that Judah would be carried away captive as Israel (the ten tribes), her sister, had been. And as tho emphasizing this thought, the Lord declared to Jeremiah, "Tho Moses and Samuel

stood before me, yet my mind could not be [changed] toward this people: cast them out of my sight." – Jer. 15:1-7.

Thus Jeremiah was what would be esteemed a prophet of evil – a pessimist. It is not surprising, therefore, that in his obedience to the Lord, in his faithfulness in speaking forth the word of the Lord, he became greatly disesteemed of his fellow countrymen, who doubtless would have honored him highly, had he prophesied unto them smooth things, promises of coming blessings and greatness as a nation. Thus we see that Jeremiah had not only the opposition of the idolatrously disposed people of the kingdom, but the disfavor also of the reformers of his day, who thought indeed that they were doing a grand work, and should be complimented thereon, and should have messages of divine favor.

We cannot avoid noting the remarkable similarity [**R2400 : page 358**] of Jeremiah's position to that of the Lord's people to-day, who are enlightened with the present truth, and who, as the messengers of God, declare this truth. Similarly these note with pleasure the fact that there are many great reforms in progress at the present time, in Christendom. Nevertheless, they are obliged to speak from the divine standpoint, "He that hath my word let him speak my word." (Jer. 23:28.) And in thus speaking the word of the Lord they oppose and contradict the many fanciful dreams of present day reformers who are vainly hoping that as a result of civilization and through human efforts, and especially those of their party, all the promised blessings are about to flow to the world of mankind, and thus by human efforts establish righteousness in the earth, and bless all the heathen.

The Lord's faithful mouthpieces of to-day, Jeremiah-like, are obliged to contradict these fanciful dreams, and to point out that they are unreasonable as well as unscriptural – that much of the present-day progress, civilization, benevolence and loving-kindness of Christendom is only an outward veneer, a drawing near to the Lord with the lips, and in some of the outward forms of conduct, while the

hearts of Christendom are far from him, and far from the law of the New Covenant – perfect love toward God and toward the neighbor.

The Jeremiah class of to-day is obliged to point out that all the various efforts being put forth for the conversion of the world will never bring the desired result, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven;" but that on the contrary the increase of the earth's population is far more than keeping pace with the increase of even nominal Christian Church membership, so that, as someone has reckoned recently (basing the calculation upon the various censuses from 1833 to the present time), at the present rate of increase of the non-Christian world over the professedly Christian world, Christianity would entirely disappear from the earth within seven hundred years. The estimate shows a loss of about one per cent, every ten years.

And as Jeremiah was, in faithfulness to the Lord, bound to proclaim the coming overthrow of the kingdom, so the Lord's people of the present time who have his word of present truth, cannot disguise or withhold the fact that a great time of trouble is approaching – is nigh, even at the door – and that it will mean the complete obliteration of the present order of things in anarchy. On this account we are esteemed by many to be pessimists, and prophesiers of evil things only; our opponents, in their bitterness, entirely overlooking and ignoring the fact that we present at the same time and from the same Word of the Lord the most glorious optimism conceivable – and show most clearly that the approaching time is merely the precursor of the great blessing which God has promised shall come to all the families of the earth, not through the imperfect powers of fallen men, but through the perfect powers of our glorious Lord and his glorified Church, his Bride, who will then be with him, his joint-heir in the Kingdom.

The method by which the Lord communicated his message to and through Jeremiah and the other Old Testament prophets is not

distinctly set forth in the Scriptures; except that the Apostle Peter declares that they "spoke and wrote as they were *moved by the holy spirit.*" Many Bible students overlook this fact, and hence attempt to explain the peculiar predictions, etc., of the prophets, as tho they were their own thoughts, the results of their own reasonings, expressions of their own views, or opinions. Quite to the contrary, they were God's views, God's expressions, and God's illustrations; and the prophets merely did, spoke and wrote what the Lord directed. The only wilfulness of the prophets, as we may understand it, was that they *willingly* gave themselves up to the Lord, thus to be his mouthpieces: the Lord would not take as his mouthpiece and prophet an unwilling, inharmonious person.

To our understanding, the Lord spoke to these prophets of olden time much after the manner in which the evil spirits now speak to spiritualist mediums – "clairaudiently." In other words, we believe that the fallen angels, personating the dead, make use of certain channels of human nature, which in time past God made use of in communicating the truth to his prophets.* As a guard upon this point, however, let us remember that God no longer speaks to his people in this way, but has closed the canon of his revelation by speaking "unto us through his Son" and his specially commissioned and empowered apostles. – Heb. 1:1,2.

**See [What Say the Scriptures About Spiritualism?](#) – 10c., this office.*

Our present lesson is located in the days of King Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah. Jeremiah had been restrained of the liberty which he possessed during the lifetime of King Josiah, the reformer, and altho not imprisoned was apparently forbidden to address the people in public. He therefore adopted (doubtless at the divine instance) the method of having a scribe take down his prophecy in writing, and Baruch was the one found worthy of this service, altho he well knew that it meant the loss of the king's favor and the putting of himself on the unpopular side of an unpopular matter. After Baruch had written the prophecy respecting Jerusalem, declaring its utter overthrow at the

hands of Nebuchadnezzar, etc., he (as the representative of Jeremiah, who was not permitted to teach) entered into the court of the Temple and read the prophecy in the hearing of all the people, who came there to worship. Some heard with interest and astonishment, and as a result the prophecy was brought to the attention of the king, peradventure he, as the representative of the people, might take some steps toward repentance, which might save the people from some of the disaster, even tho as a whole it might not be prevented. When the king heard respecting the matter he was curious to hear it also, but he became so incensed and indignant at what he considered the extreme improbability of the prophecy that, taking the scribe's knife, he cut the manuscript into small pieces and burned it in the fire before him.

Jeremiah's God-directed course may serve as a lesson to God's people of to-day, who have "present truth" to present. Their message is to be delivered, and if they are hindered or restrained or forbidden to speak it in the temple (in the nominal churches), they should adopt some other method of presenting their message to the attention of those who are seeking to worship the Lord. They may do this either by the written or the printed message. As a result, the right ones will hear, and yet when the knowledge of the present condition is brought to the attention of those in power, they will be similarly disrespectful to the message, and skeptical respecting its divine authority. They may even attempt to destroy the printed page, or hinder its circulation, but the attempt will be futile, as it was in the case under consideration.

Amongst those who were present at the destruction of the Lord's message by the king, three only offered any protest, and they manifested no indignation, no [R2401 : page 358] sorrow, but merely advised in a worldly-wise way that the king be not too rash. So there are to-day those who [R2401 : page 359] have some interest in present truth, some knowledge respecting it, and who, nevertheless, for fear of their influence in worldly-church and political circles would do no more than *advise* a more liberal course. Meantime, realizing the king's attitude of heart and opposition to the message, Jeremiah and Baruch

fled and hid themselves, or, as expressed in the lesson, "The Lord hid them" – prevented their royal enemy from finding them. We shall not be greatly surprised if in the not very distant future not only the message of present truth will be considerably in disrepute before those in high positions, but also its servants and promulgators: these also may need to hide from injustice, but the Lord is able to shield them.

The king may have thought that he had utterly wiped out the Lord's message and annulled it when he burned the roll, but the result was quite to the contrary. At the Lord's instance Jeremiah prepared another manuscript containing the same prophecy, and with additional matter, and the king brought upon himself additional trouble, as a punishment for his contumacy.

It is still possible to endeavor to destroy God's Word, tho all such efforts will fail: the Word of God will eventually triumph. It may be attempted variously:

(1) By rejecting the Word of God, the Bible – perverting its statements and ridiculing them.

(2) By speaking of its truths irreverently and connecting them with funny stories, and thus vitiating its influence upon speaker and hearers.

(3) By neglecting it, leaving it unread, unstudied.

(4) By forbidding people to read the Bible, or even by limiting or hindering Scriptural investigation.

(5) By persecuting those who preach and teach it conscientiously because their interpretations are contrary.

(6) By misrepresenting the Word of God, substituting for its teachings the traditions of men – hymnbook and creed theology, misrepresenting it to be Bible theology – and thus misrepresenting

God's character and plan, while professedly serving him, honoring his Word.

(7) By skipping over and ignoring certain teachings of the Scriptures, because they do not harmonize with preconceived opinions and preferences, as on election, free grace, the Second Death, etc., etc.

All of these are modern methods of fighting against God, sure to bring punishments – darkness, divine disfavor.
