

Both Prophet and Priest are Godless

23: 9-12

DIG: Why would Jeremiah feel like a drunken man upon finding out that the court prophets were charlatans? What does God mean by calling the prophets adulterers? What did God promise to do with people who claimed to be His prophets or priests but were in fact godless and wicked (23:11-12)?

REFLECT: Why did ADONAI need prophets during the days of Jeremiah and Ezeki'el? Is the canon of Scripture closed today? Why or why not? If there were prophets today, what standard would they have to meet? Who are the false prophets today? How can you identify a false prophet? What is their message?

597 BC during the eleven-year reign of Zedekiah

Concerning the prophets, Jeremiah is distraught and says: My heart is broken within me; all my bones tremble. I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome with wine, because of the LORD and His holy words (23:9). He was not overcome with wine, but overcome with God's word concerning the false prophets. He must have been deeply moved over the vices that prevailed in the Land. The false prophets must bear responsibility because they condoned, if not encouraged, the rebellion against ADONAI.

In violation of the Torah (see the commentary on Exodus Dq - You Shall Not Commit Adultery), the Land is full of adulterers. The worship of Ba'al, the Canaanite god of fertility, far from producing a bountiful harvest, had the opposite effect because of the curse the Land lies parched and the pastures in the desert are withered (12:4). To worship other gods is to deny the prosperity to the Land that only ADONAI can bring (Hosea 2:5-8 and 21-22; Amos 4:4-9). The [false] prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly (23:10).

Again he deals with the basic problem - the sins of the people. Both the prophet and priest are godless; even in My Temple I find their wickedness, declares the LORD (23:11). Despite the reform of Josiah in 622 BC (see Ai - Josiah Ruled For 31 Years from 640 to 609 BC) where he rooted out pagan cults from the Temple compound, after his death in 609 BC, there was a recurrence of these practices in the days of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Ezekiel gives us a good idea of what went on in the Temple (see Eu - Idolatry in the Temple). It was this that troubled Yirmeyahu so much.

Concerning the priests: Therefore, their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and then they will fall. No light of God's Word would illuminate their path. I will bring disaster on them in the year they are punished, declares Ha'Shem (24:12). The judgment would especially come against the prophets and the priests. God would put them in total darkness, ultimately falling into exile in 586 BC. The exact opposite of what they had prophesied would happen. Unmercifully they would be driven by the Adversary to their ruin, for YHVH had rejected them.

Concerning the prophets: The canon of Scripture is closed today. Anyone who claims to be a prophet, then, should be subjected to God's standard for prophets: I Myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Kz - Your Word Is Truth](#)). But a godless prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death (Deuteronomy 18:19-20). The ultimate Prophet like Moshe (Deuteronomy 18: 15 and 18) is Yeshua Messiah - the One who spoke words of ADONAI. They are the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (Romans 1:16).

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" In the Dispensation of the Torah (see the commentary on [Exodus Da - The Dispensation of the Torah](#)) this was the standard: If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not come true, that is a message ADONAI has not spoken, that prophet has spoken presumptuously and must be put to death (Deuteronomy 18: 20b-22). But since the canon of Scripture is closed today, there is no new revelation for the universal Church. Yes, the Lord still reveals His will to us individually. But anyone professing to speak for God today, must line up with His Word.

It is of great significance that the Bible closes with an affirmation of its truthfulness. Because the words of Scripture are trustworthy and true (22:6), they must not be sealed up, but proclaimed (22:10). Sinners are to be called to respond to the warnings in the Word of God or suffer the consequences. All the prophecies of Revelation regarding the doom of unbelievers will come true. That terrifying certainty should drive people to accept Yeshua, who rescues us from the coming wrath (First Thessalonians 1:10).²⁴⁹

John warns everyone who hears the word of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book (Revelation 22:18), ultimately the lake of fire.

John's warning refers to the book of **Revelation**, not the whole Bible. However, since this is the final revelation of **God's** Word, the principle behind the warning can be extended to the whole Bible because the Scriptures are complete only with this final book. Once **John** died, no further inspired books would be written (**Ephesians 2:11 to 3:12**). If this were not true, revelation would be open-ended, and churches and messianic synagogues would have no way of distinguishing between false and true doctrine.

Examples of those who add to **God's** Word, are the numerous cults that accept other writing as inspired and authoritative and place them on equal (or higher) grounds with the Bible. The Mormons have their *Book of Mormon*, Christian Science have their *Key to the Scriptures*, the Jehovah's Witnesses have their *New World Translation (NWT)*, and the Muslims have their *Koran*. In view of the proliferation of all kinds of cults and winds of doctrine sweeping across the world today, most of them rooted in some charismatic personality with claims of divine wisdom and authority, **John's** warning is needed more today than ever before.

And if anyone takes words away, literally to cut off, from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll (Revelation 22:19).

Now if it is a deadly crime to add to the **words** of Scripture, then it is even more wicked and dangerous to take them **away**. Adding false scripture to true Scripture at least leaves the truth, with the saving Gospel in tact. Trying to *cut off* certain unwanted words of **God** from the Bible, on the other hand, will dilute or destroy its saving message and living truth. That is why the influences of the cults, as bad as they are, still are not as deadly as those, like the Jesus Seminar, who specialize in cutting out or explaining away all those portions of the Bible that offend their humanistic prejudices and evolutionary presumptions. All of the Scriptures have been attacked by such people, but none so much as the books of **Genesis** and **Revelation**.²⁵⁰ The penalty for removing anything from the Bible is nothing less than the removal of **that person's** name from **the Lamb's book of life, that person's share in the tree of life** and their entrance into the New Jerusalem.

The cults add to the words of the Bible and the liberals take them away. The form of the warning comes from **Deuteronomy 4:2**, where **God** admonishes Israel: **Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of ADONAI your God that I give you.** In **Deuteronomy 12:32** he added: **See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.** **Proverbs 30:5-6** warns: **Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, or He will rebuke you and prove you a liar.** Therefore, the prohibition against altering the words of **Revelation** by implication extends to the entire Bible. As **John** had said: **The Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).**

No true believer would ever deliberately tamper with Scripture. Those who know and love ADONAI will treat His Word with the utmost respect. They will agree with the psalter: **How I love your Torah (Psalm 119:97, 119:113, 163, 167; John 14:23); and, I delight in Your Torah (Psalm 119:70, Psalm 1:2, 119:77, 92, 174).** That does not, of course, mean that believers will never make errors in judgment or mistakenly interpret the Bible. **The Lord's** warning here is addressed to those who purposefully distort or falsify Scripture. Rabbi Sha'ul says that these **peddle the Word of God for profit (2 Corinthians 2:17).**²⁵¹