

Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Session 18, Jeremiah 23, False Prophets

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Yates, Jeremiah, Session 18, Jeremiah 23, False Prophets, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Gary Yates **analyzes Jeremiah chapter 23**, focusing on the **false prophets** who offered misleading messages of peace to the people of Judah. He contrasts their **false prophecies** with Jeremiah's **true prophecies of judgment**, emphasizing the importance of discerning between them. Yates highlights the false prophets' **failure to heed God's counsel**, their promotion of **spiritual adultery**, and their ultimately **empty promises**. The lecture concludes by drawing parallels between the false prophets of Jeremiah's time and similar issues in contemporary Christianity.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Yates, Jeremiah, Session 18 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Jeremiah).



Yates_Jeremiah_Session18.mp3

3. Yates, Jeremiah, Session 18, Jeremiah 23, False Prophets

Jeremiah 23: False Prophets Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What was the role of a shepherd in ancient Israel, and how did the leaders of Judah fail in this role?
2. According to Jeremiah, what was the primary spiritual sin that the prophets of Judah were guilty of promoting?
3. What were the false prophets in Judah saying to the people that caused them to be led astray?
4. How did the false prophets' understanding of the covenant differ from Jeremiah's understanding?
5. How did the people's unbelief contribute to their being deceived by false prophets, according to the lecture?
6. What does the "counsel of the Lord" represent in the context of Jeremiah 23, and what does it signify about a true prophet?
7. How did Micaiah's experience in 1 Kings 22 illustrate the concept of the divine council?
8. What is the significance of the word "sheker" in relation to the false prophets' message?
9. How does the lecture connect the issue of false prophecy in Jeremiah's time to the issue of false teaching today?
10. According to the lecture, what are some ways in which false teaching can manifest in modern culture?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Shepherds were meant to care for, provide for, and protect their flock. However, the leaders of Judah, like wicked kings, consumed the flock instead of protecting them, leading them astray.
2. The prophets of Judah were primarily guilty of promoting spiritual adultery by encouraging the worship of false gods and promising peace when God had

warned of judgment. They made the people comfortable in their sins instead of calling them to repentance.

3. The false prophets were speaking their own visions and dreams, offering a message of false peace, and assuring people that God would protect them no matter what, even in their sin. They did not speak messages from God.
4. Jeremiah emphasized the need for obedience and held that God would bless or punish based on this adherence to the covenant. The false prophets, in contrast, focused only on the covenant promises, ignoring the responsibilities and obligations placed on the people.
5. The people refused to listen to the warnings of the true prophets and were thus punished by God, who blinded their minds, causing them to believe the empty promises of the false prophets. God punished unbelief with unbelief and spiritual blindness.
6. The "counsel of the Lord" represents a heavenly assembly where God makes his decrees and decisions. A true prophet, according to Jeremiah, is one who has stood in this counsel, heard God's message, and delivers it accurately to the people.
7. Micaiah claimed to have been in God's divine council where he heard God's plan to deceive Ahab into battle. This illustrated the idea that prophets, both true and false, can be messengers of the divine council, though with different sources and purposes.
8. "Sheker" is a Hebrew word for falsehood, and it underscores the deceptive and untruthful nature of the false prophets' message. Their message is empty of divine truth and leads people astray.
9. The lecture suggests that the false teachers today, like the false prophets of Jeremiah's time, often promote popular messages, seeking to be agreeable and avoiding conflict. This contemporary issue echoes the problem of messages that validate sin instead of confronting it.
10. According to the lecture, false teaching today can manifest in prosperity theology, where the focus is on health and material success; in postmodern relativism, where moral absolutes are surrendered; and in an overemphasis on the positive aspects of the gospel while ignoring the need for repentance and judgment.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the role of leadership, both civil and spiritual, in the apostasy of Judah, according to Jeremiah 23, and evaluate the specific ways these leaders failed their responsibilities.
2. Compare and contrast the messages of Jeremiah and the false prophets, highlighting the key theological differences that caused their conflict and the impact of these differences on the people of Judah.
3. Analyze the significance of the "counsel of the Lord" in Jeremiah 23, and explore its implications for understanding the role and authority of true prophets in ancient Israel.
4. Examine the lecture's claims regarding the consequences of unbelief, both in Jeremiah's time and in the present day, and analyze how these claims are supported by the biblical texts discussed.
5. Evaluate the parallels drawn in the lecture between false prophecy in Jeremiah's time and false teaching in contemporary culture, and discuss the contemporary implications of these parallels for discernment and faithfulness.

Glossary of Key Terms

Apostasy: The abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief or principle. In the context of Jeremiah, it refers to Judah's turning away from Yahweh.

Baal: A Canaanite god of fertility, often worshipped by those who had forsaken Yahweh.

Covenant: A sacred agreement between two parties, in this context, between God and the people of Israel, involving promises and obligations.

Divine Council: The heavenly assembly where God meets with his angelic messengers to determine and enact his will.

Eschatological: Pertaining to the end of times or last things.

False Prophet: A person who claims to speak for God but whose messages do not come from God, often offering messages that are self-serving or contrary to God's word.

Masa: Hebrew word meaning "burden," often used in reference to a prophetic message from God.

Presumptive Faith: A belief that God will protect or bless, regardless of one's actions or obedience, often leading to complacency and a lack of repentance.

Sheker: Hebrew for "falsehood" or "lie," used to describe the messages of the false prophets, contrasting with the truth of God's word.

Syncretism: The blending of different religious beliefs or practices, often resulting in a compromised faith.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Gary Yates' lecture on Jeremiah 23, focusing on the issue of false prophets:

Briefing Document: Jeremiah 23 and the Problem of False Prophets

Source: Excerpts from "Yates_Jer_En_Lecture18.pdf"

Date: Lecture delivered in 2024

Overview: This lecture by Dr. Gary Yates explores Jeremiah chapter 23, focusing on the problem of false prophets in Judah during Jeremiah's time. The lecture delves into the nature of their false messages, their impact on the people, and how to distinguish a true prophet from a false one. It also connects these ancient issues to contemporary challenges in the church.

Main Themes and Ideas:

1. Judgment on Leadership:

- Jeremiah 23 begins by pronouncing judgment on the leaders of Judah, both civil (kings, officials) and spiritual (prophets, priests). They are described as "shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep" (Jeremiah 23:1). This imagery highlights their failure to care for and protect the people.
- King Jehoiakim is specifically called out as an ultimate antagonist, with a "woe" pronounced against him for his injustice (Jeremiah 22:13).
- The lecture emphasizes that the apostasy of Judah is partly due to the bad leadership.

1. Spiritual Adultery and the Role of False Prophets:

- The lecture connects the theme of spiritual adultery (unfaithfulness to God) to the actions of the false prophets. Just as the people of Judah were indicted for being an unfaithful wife (Jeremiah 2), the false prophets had led them into this unfaithfulness by promoting the worship of false gods and promising "peace" when God had warned of judgment.
- The prophets, who should have been messengers of truth, are identified as promoters of this spiritual infidelity. They made people comfortable in their sins and encouraged their adulterous behavior.

- Dr. Yates emphasizes that the prophets were largely responsible for this spiritual adultery.

1. **The False Message of Peace:**

- A central theme is the false message of "peace, peace" promoted by these prophets when God had not declared peace (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11). This was a message of false hope and security.
- The prophets based this false peace on presumptions of God's protection of Jerusalem, citing the temple and promises to David without acknowledging the covenantal obligations of obedience.
- They ignored the warnings of judgment, offering instead "vain hopes" and speaking "visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:16). They told people "it will be well with you" regardless of their sins (Jeremiah 23:17).
- They offered a theological excuse for people to not repent from their sins.

1. **The True Prophet vs. The False Prophet**

- **Origin of Message:** True prophets speak a message originating from God, not their own minds or will (referencing 2 Peter). They have "stood in the counsel of the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:18), which means they have been in the divine presence, heard God's decrees and are conveying them faithfully. False prophets speak visions that originate from their own minds.
- **Content of Message:** True prophets emphasize both God's love and his judgment, call for repentance, and uphold the covenantal responsibilities as well as blessings. False prophets offer a message of comfort that confirms and validates people's desires.
- **The Consequences of False Prophecy:** The lecture points out that false messages lead people to a place of bitter disappointment when the prophesied peace does not come (Jeremiah 8:19-20).

1. **God's Role in Deception:**

- The lecture explores the idea that God sometimes punishes unbelief by causing people to believe falsehoods (2 Thessalonians 2:11, Romans 1). Jeremiah even asks God why He has deceived the people into thinking all will be well (Jeremiah 4:10).

- However, it also states that God does not remove the people's responsibility in choosing to believe the false prophets. The people were not forced, but rather, their unbelief was punished by giving them over to delusion and spiritual blindness.
- God allows them to believe the false message as a consequence of their refusal to listen to the true prophets.

1. **The Importance of Testing Prophecy:**

- Dr. Yates emphasizes that God did not leave the people without ways to test the validity of a prophet. Deuteronomy 18 lays out some important standards. A true prophet must:
 - Be an Israelite.
 - Speak in the name of the Lord.
 - Not promote the worship of other gods.
 - Have 100% accuracy in prophecies.
- However, the lecture notes that these tests could be difficult for the people in Jeremiah's day. The prophecies hadn't yet come to pass so the validity of a prophet wasn't always apparent at the time of speaking.
- The false prophets often don't wear a "false prophet" label; they may even appear to be sincere.

1. **The "Counsel of the Lord":**

- A key point in the lecture is the concept of the "counsel of the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:18). It's explained as a heavenly cabinet meeting where God announces his decrees.
- True prophets have stood in this divine council, heard God's word, and are then commissioned to speak it to the people. This is what validates their message as authentic. False prophets, on the other hand, have not stood in the counsel of the Lord and are speaking from their own minds.
- Biblical examples of the divine counsel are given (Genesis 1, Isaiah 6, Job 1, and 1 Kings 22) to illustrate the prophet's role as a messenger of God's decree.

1. The Divine Council and Micaiah

- The story of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22, who claims to have witnessed God's decision to deceive Ahab, is used as an example of the prophet having access to God's counsel and delivering a message regardless of its popularity or acceptance.
- Micaiah's speech emphasizes that God can use a false message to punish those who reject the truth.
- **Application for Today:** Dr. Yates argues that the problem of false teaching and false prophecy is still relevant today. He highlights that false teaching often involves:
 - Saying what is popular rather than what is true.
 - Avoiding conflict and uncomfortable truths.
 - Confirming the prevailing ideas of the culture.
 - Shaping the message to please the audience.
- Examples of modern false teaching are given (prosperity theology, syncretism of American culture with Christian faith, relativism, diminishing moral absolutes of Scripture, and focusing solely on the love of God to the exclusion of his justice).

Key Quotes from the Lecture:

- "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and who scatter the sheep of my pasture." (Jeremiah 23:1)
- "My heart is broken within me, and all of my bones shake...for the land is full of adulterers" (Referring to Jeremiah 23:9-10).
- "In the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies." (Jeremiah 23:14)
- "They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:16)
- "They continually say to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It will be well with you.'" (Jeremiah 23:17)
- "Who among them has stood in the counsel of the Lord to see and to hear his word?" (Jeremiah 23:18)

- "False teaching often involves saying what is popular. It involves saying what people want to hear...It is often simply validating the prevailing ideas of the culture around us rather than confronting that culture with the truth of God's Word."

Conclusion:

Dr. Yates' lecture on Jeremiah 23 provides a rich understanding of the challenges faced by the people of Judah in discerning true prophecy from false. It emphasizes that true prophets faithfully communicate God's message, even if it is unpopular, while false prophets promote a comfortable message that ignores sin and its consequences. This lecture reminds listeners of the ongoing importance of carefully discerning spiritual teaching and ensuring that we, as believers today, are not repeating the mistakes of the people of Judah. The message is that true teaching must be rooted in the whole counsel of God, and not in what people want to hear.

5. FAQs on Yates, Jeremiah, Session 18, Jeremiah 23, False Prophets, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on False Prophets and True Prophecy in Jeremiah

- **What were the main failures of the leaders of Judah, according to Jeremiah?**
- The leaders of Judah, including the kings, officials, and military leaders, led the people astray through injustice and unrighteousness. The spiritual leaders, such as the prophets and priests, were also corrupt and failed to guide the people correctly. These leaders, who were meant to be shepherds caring for the flock, instead consumed and harmed the people, acting in their own self-interest rather than the good of the nation. They promoted spiritual adultery by encouraging the worship of false gods and promising peace when judgment was imminent.
- **How did the false prophets contribute to the problems of Judah?**
- The false prophets played a significant role in the downfall of Judah by speaking their own messages and visions, not those of the Lord. They offered a message of false peace, telling people "all will be well," regardless of their sin. This false sense of security removed any motivation for the people to repent and return to God. They focused solely on God's promises, neglecting the covenant responsibilities and obligations laid upon the people. They essentially validated sinful behavior and offered a "feel-good" message rather than a call for genuine repentance. They were more concerned with popularity than truth.
- **What is meant by the phrase "standing in the counsel of the Lord," and why is it important in the context of discerning true prophecy?**
- "Standing in the counsel of the Lord" refers to a figurative picture of the heavenly court where God, as the sovereign ruler, meets with his divine council to announce his decrees and decisions. A true prophet, like Jeremiah, is believed to have access to this divine council, hearing God's direct message and acting as his messenger. This is in contrast to false prophets who speak their own visions and delusions. The true prophet's authority comes from this direct encounter with God's plan, while false prophets only have their own ideas. This access to the divine council is thus a key element that distinguishes true prophets from the false, giving true prophets the authority of God.

- **How did the false prophets' message differ from that of Jeremiah?**
- Jeremiah's message, grounded in the Mosaic covenant, focused on both God's blessings and the consequences of disobedience. He warned of impending judgment, exile, and destruction due to Judah's unfaithfulness and called for repentance. The false prophets, however, focused solely on God's promises to David and Jerusalem, offering assurances of peace and protection regardless of the people's sin. They denied any impending disaster, saying that God would never let Jerusalem fall, thus providing a dangerous and false sense of security.
- **What were the specific reasons the people were led astray by these false prophets?**
- The false prophets appealed to the desires and hopes of the people by offering easy and comforting messages. They told the people what they wanted to hear, avoiding confrontation about their sin and immoral behavior. This message of false peace also minimized their sense of personal responsibility and the consequences of disobedience to God. They twisted and perverted the scriptures and the true message of God by only emphasizing the promises of God rather than both promises and responsibilities. By speaking messages that seemed to validate their lifestyles, the people were easily deluded and did not seek to change their ways.
- **How does the idea of God "punishing unbelief with unbelief" relate to the people's acceptance of the false prophets' message?**
- God, in his divine judgment, allowed the people to believe the false messages of the prophets as a consequence of their initial rejection of the true prophets' warnings. God's messengers had come to Israel repeatedly, but the people refused to listen. Their rejection of truth led to God further hardening their hearts and giving them over to delusion, a form of divine punishment for their unbelief. This resulted in them embracing messages that confirmed their sinful tendencies rather than seeking repentance. This mirrors New Testament passages where people are given over to delusion because of their rejection of truth.

- **What are some of the modern-day parallels of false prophecy mentioned in the lecture?**
- Modern-day parallels to false prophecy include prosperity theology, which emphasizes health and wealth as guaranteed outcomes of faith, and the diminishing of Christian doctrines and moral absolutes to align with popular cultural ideals. Other parallels include a focus on building large and successful churches without emphasizing a call for repentance. Additionally, downplaying the wrath of God and the demand for atonement, or revising understandings of core doctrines to avoid offense, all echo the false messages of peace that were preached in Jeremiah's time, which allows for a comfortable, culturally palatable, yet ultimately untrue message.
- **According to Jeremiah, what is the ultimate measure of a true prophet?**
- The ultimate measure of a true prophet, according to Jeremiah, is whether they have "stood in the counsel of the Lord" and have received a direct message from God. They speak the word of the Lord faithfully and do not present their own ideas and desires. They must remind the people of both God's love *and* God's judgment. True prophets remind the people of their covenant responsibilities, as well as God's promises. Their messages must also be consistent with the truth of God's Word rather than merely echoing popular sentiment or cultural norms.