

Sabbath School Lesson #5 – More Woes for the Prophet – 24-30 October 2015

Christ in His mercy sent messengers to Israel. Instead of repenting, Israel mocked the messengers. Describing his bitter experience, Jeremiah says: “O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me” (Jeremiah 20:7). It is thus Christ said to His disciples, “Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3). Indeed, the prophet Jeremiah, misrepresented and misunderstood by Israel, was a lamb among wolves.

The prophet Jeremiah suffered more woes reproving Israel. Jeremiah was derided and reproached and threatened, and he says: “Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name. But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9). Many today take that decision and act upon it; especially due to more woes they suffer from fellow Seventh-day Adventists, trying to reprove the many evils among us, these messengers of God decide to remain silent. Jeremiah did not act upon his decision, for the Spirit of Christ in him was stronger than he, as he “heard the defaming of many” (verse 10), he could not keep silent.

“In this generation, when God’s servants speak the word of the Lord to reprove wrongdoers, to rebuke those who bring in wrong principles, have they not had an experience similar to that which Jeremiah had? When a course of action to pervert justice and judgment is introduced, the word of the Lord must be spoken in reproof. In this our day we find the very same difficulties that the Lord’s servants found in the days of ancient Israel when they were sent to expose existing evils that were corrupting in their influence” {4BC 1156.8}.

Some of the evils that Jeremiah was dealing with are no different from what prevails in our Seventh-day Adventist Church today. He recounts, “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah” (Jeremiah 23:14). Only heaven can tell, how many who profess to be Seventh-day Adventists yet “commit adultery, and walk in lies” and “strengthen also the hand of evildoers,” and would be verily described by Jeremiah “as Sodom” and “as Gomorrah”! Yet, the same professing to be Adventists would not take reproof from the messengers of God. For today’s apostasy, Jeremiah would reprove most Seventh-day Adventists for being controlled by appetites – eating meat to strengthen lower passions. Today, Jeremiah would say to most of our ministers who only give lip services to health message, “Far better give up the name of Christian than make a profession and at the same time indulge appetites which strengthen unholy passions” {RH May 27, 1902 Par 15}.

If Jeremiah were alive today, he would undoubtedly suffer more woes from many of our leaders in our Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is impossible to imagine where Jeremiah would start, for the growing apostasy is overwhelming! He would certainly reprove modern Baal worship we adopted (see booklets: *Greater Abominations*; and *True God and His Son*); He would certainly reprove immodesty in dress, amusements, and irreverence (see booklet: *Who shall abide in thy tabernacle*); He would certainly reprove the new worship styles (see booklet: *Contemporary Celebratory Worship*); He would certainly speak out against women ordination (see booklet: *Women Elders and Pastors*); and he would certainly reprove us for our changed religion that has “a system of intellectual philosophy” {1SM 204.2} such as the Natural Church Development methods that have long turned our churches into social clubs!

In his 2010 sermon as General Conference president, Pastor Ted Wilson appealed to our Seventh-day Adventist Church: “Do not succumb to the mistaken idea, gaining support even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of accepting worship or evangelistic outreach methods merely because they are new and ‘trendy.’ We must be vigilant to test all things according to the supreme authority of God’s Word and the counsel with which we have been blessed in the writings of Ellen G White. Don’t reach out to movements or megachurch centers outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church which promise you spiritual success based on faulty theology. Stay away from non-biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted” (*Adventist Review*, 8 July 2010).

One of these outreach methods is Natural Church Development (NCD). NCD had been entrenched in our Church long before 2010 when Pastor Ted Wilson spoke against using the mega church growth methods; and it continued thereafter. In 2013, NCD continued in British Union Conference, as “pastors, elders and prospective trainers gathered in Staffordshire, 7-10 January, to learn about how to measure the quality of God’s churches. Their trainers were two experts in the field. Justin Lawman, a Conference President, from Australia was accompanied by an Anglican who was described as ‘knowing more about Seventh-day Adventist church growth than Adventists.’ As learning continued it was discovered the remark was no jest. Ian Campbell, from Natural Church Development International really does know Seventh-day Adventists” (reported in *BUC News* Edition #811 (11 January 2013).

“Let him that readeth understand” (Mark 13:14); we are told that: “The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists,” but as a result “Our religion would be changed” and “A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure” {1SM 204.2}.

Our apostasy can be traced back in 1888 when our leaders back then rejected the most precious message of Christ’s righteousness: “God had sent these young men, Elders Jones and Waggoner, to bear a special message to them” {1888 1043.2}. Like Jeremiah, Jones and Waggoner suffered more woes from the opposing brethren. Criticising the messengers imposed on them a burden that was heavier to carry than normal opposition: “Whatever course the messenger may pursue, it will be objectionable to the opposers of truth; and they will make capital of every defect in the manners, customs, or character of its advocate” {ibid 1061.6}. In opposition, some brethren were “full of jealousy and evil surmising, and are ever ready to show in just what way they differ with Elders Jones and Waggoner” {ibid 1042.3}.

Some of the opposing leaders back then failed to confess their sin. Writing to Elder Uriah Smith, Ellen White said: “Some have made confession, yourself among the number. Others have made no confession, for they were too proud to do this, and they have not come to the light. They were moved at the meeting by another spirit, and they knew not that God had sent these young men, Elders Jones and Waggoner, to bear a special message to them, which they treated with ridicule and contempt, not realizing that the heavenly intelligences were looking upon them and registering their words in the books of heaven” {ibid 1043.2}.

Like Jeremiah, Jones and Waggoner spoke positively and strongly, and suffered more woes! Men looked for excuse to reject the message: “Let no soul complain of the servants of God who have come to them with a heaven-sent message. Do not any longer pick flaws in them, saying, ‘They are too positive; they talk too strongly.’ They may talk strongly; but is it not needed?” {TM 410.1}. The Lord Himself had clothed His personal messengers with evidences of authority, “heavenly credentials.” They had lost sight of self in their love for Christ and His special message. The still-uncrucified self in others was annoyed: “If the rays of light which shone at Minneapolis were permitted to exert their convincing power upon those who took their stand against light, if all had yielded their ways, and submitted their wills to the Spirit of God at that time, they would have received the richest blessings, disappointed the enemy, and stood as faithful men, true to their convictions. They would have had a rich experience; but self said, No. Self was not to be refused; self struggled for the mastery” {1888 1030.1}. At Minneapolis, the personality of Elders Jones and Waggoner became the visible, conscious stumbling-block for the invisible, unconscious rejection of Christ: “Men professing godliness have despised Christ in the person of His messengers. Like the Jews, they reject God’s message. The Jews asked regarding Christ, ‘Who is this? Is not this Joseph’s son?’ He was not the Christ that the Jews had looked for. So today the agencies that God sends are not what men have looked for” {RH 17 August 1897 Par 15}.

Are you, like Jeremiah, willing to suffer more woes reproving sin in our church today? Are you, like Jones and Waggoner, willing to be used of God to preach Christ and Him crucified?