

# Jeremiah 11:18-23 – Men want to kill the Messenger of Truth

Calvin, Barnes, JFB, TSK, HebrewLexicon, Armstrong, Gaebelein, Gray, Trapp, Poole, Henry, Delitzsch, Clarke, Geneva, Handfuls, INT Beloved in the Lord Jesus: **It is a time of great crisis if someone wants to kill you.** And it is a **time of greater crisis if someone wants to kill you for speaking the truth!** **Jeremiah had this greater crisis.** God had called Jeremiah to call Judah to repent so they could avoid captivity! And knowing the people would not repent and would go into captivity, God called Jeremiah to also tell the people how to prepare to live after captivity. **How would Jeremiah deal with his existential crisis?** That is what you will hear about today.

Our headings are:

**The Messenger Threatened with death**

**The Messenger Called to God for Vengeance**

**The Messenger Promised Justice by God**

Our goals are: **That you will know the reality of opposition faithful teachers of God's Word will face (even from within the church), and that you will continue to spread God's Word in spite of threats and wait for God's justice on the wicked.**

## **The Messenger Threatened with Death**

18 Now **the LORD gave me knowledge of it,** and I know it; for You showed me their doings.

### **1. Jeremiah learned, directly from God, that some Jews were secretly planning to kill him.**

It is quite remarkable that a people who pretended to worship Yahweh were planning to kill Yahweh's prophet. **But what could one expect, however, as that is what they did to the perfect Savior?** Rejected in his hometown and then killed!

**Isaiah 53: 7** He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

### **2. Why did these people (who were part of Jeremiah's own clan) want to kill Jeremiah?**

**a. The men of Anathoth hated what Jeremiah said about their sacrilegious lives!** Anathoth was **home to Abiathar, a priest during David's reign,** who **betrayed David by trying to corrupt the line of succession and was consequently replaced.** The men of **Anathoth then tried to be their own priests and make their own sacrifices,** ignoring the tabernacle in Shiloh, and later, the temple in Jerusalem. **Jeremiah rejected the idea the priest could make sacrifices in Anathoth, away from the one temple.** More, **Jeremiah also spoke in favor of King Josiah's reforms which stopped the promoting of local sanctuaries and promoted the one temple in Jerusalem.** To allow more places of worship would be to show there would be many saviors! **But Jesus was the only one who "tabernacled" and "templed" among the people.** There was only one sacrifice for sins!

**b. Jeremiah told the people of the coming Babylonian captivity because of their sin and urged them to change their way of life.** The men of Anathoth believed their lives were good and had no need to change. Silver blinded their eyes to their sins.

19 But **I was like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter;** and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, saying, "**Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,** and let us **cut him off from the land of the living,** **that his name may be remembered no more.**"

### **3. These men had no conscience; they would kill a man in the prime of his life, a man who did not have a chance to be married or to have children yet.**

To destroy and "tree with its fruit" was a proverb referencing total destruction – **man and children.** The men of Anathoth wanted to destroy the **prophet and his prophecies** – completely!

**Jeremiah saw himself like a Hebrew or Arab pet lamb that appeared to be loved and cherish until it was taken away and its head cut off and cooked!**

### **4. These men wanted not just to destroy Jeremiah, not just stop him from speaking, but they wanted to be sure no one would even remember his name!**

Remarkably, that was what Roman Catholics tried to do to their enemies. For instance, they declared they wanted to blot out the name of John Calvin, wherever it was found. Some even changed their name if it were Calvin.

## **5. Lessons:**

**a. One investigator reported Prime Minister Trudeau said Christians were the greatest threat to the country.** He was saying what wicked men have said all along! These people wouldn't say it against God, **but his people are fair game!** So **don't be surprised there is deep, seething hatred of Christianity – a Christianity that stands for the exclusivity of Christ.** It is naïve to think there is not deep hatred. If these enemies existed among God's covenant people, it is obvious they would be present among God's enemies. **Karina, take the warnings about these wolves who are murderers!** They are wolves!

**Matthew 10:16** "Behold, I send you out as **sheep in the midst of wolves.** Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

**Romans 8:36** As it is written: "For Your sake **we are killed all day long;** We are **accounted as sheep for the slaughter.**"

**b. More than hating Christians, many hate God's Word because it speaks clearly against their way of life.**

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

**Speak the truth in love, but don't apologize for speaking truth.** If they have an issue, ask them to take it up with God.

**c. Jeremiah was threatened just as Jesus was threatened...and eventually killed.** So you might lose a few friends! But those are not high-quality friends if they reject you for speaking truth.

**d. The truth you announce will continue longer than any of the people you oppose!** Your truth, because it is God's truth, has staying power! Keep speaking it.

## **The Messenger Called to God for Vengeance**

20 But, O **LORD of hosts**, You who **judge righteously**, **Testing the mind** and the heart, Let me see Your **vengeance on them**, For to You **I have revealed my cause**.

**1. Jeremiah, as other prophets, called on God to expose and destroy "God's" enemies – though they were also his enemies.**

The men of Anathoth were fighting against God's Word...and God's kingdom.

**2. Jeremiah based his call for God's vengeance on God's enemies because of the very nature of God: God is a just judge!**

God's justice is the ground for praise. So Jeremiah was showing zeal for the glory of God. There was no contradiction in Jeremiah being a **docile lamb and yet calling for God's justice**. As a private man, he knew his heart and his own sins! But as a soldier in the kingdom, he had to cry out for justice so the cause of Christ would be advanced and God would be honored.

Psalms 69:9 Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

**Remember how the Lamb of God took a whip and beat thieves and chased them out of the temple?**

**3. Jeremiah wanted God to intervene directly or to use the state to bring justice on these wicked men.**

## **4. Lessons:**

**a. Regardless of what others falsely think of you or accuse you, God is always fair!** Don't worry!

Jeremiah 17:10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

God will keep you! **God will clear your name...if not in this life, surely in the life that matters!**

**b. Don't be afraid to pray God will bring justice on those who threaten, abuse, and kill his people.**

Psalms 54:7 For He has delivered me out of all trouble; **And my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies.**

Psalms 118:7 The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore **I shall see my desire on those who hate me.**

Make sure when you are praying these imprecatory prayers that you are **praying for judgment for those who threatening God's church**, and those who are **seeking to stop God's Word from spreading**. If you made an enemy because of your sin, don't pray for God to destroy that person!

**c. There are many imprecatory psalms where the psalmist calls for God's justice on his enemies!**

You are even commanded to **sing them**. They are a pattern to follow. (But they are not for personal revenge!) He is praying the state may do its job or God might intervene directly. And this is what you can pray for as well. Pray for God to bring justice on a corrupt pastor, cop, judge, or government official or a nation that persecutes God's people or hinder his worship and his kingdom!

## **The Messenger's Promised Justice by God**

21 "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the **men of Anathoth who seek your life**, saying, **'Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, lest you die by our hand'** —

**1. The Lord answered Jeremiah positively by indicating his intention to clear Jeremiah's good name.**

God knew the men of Anathoth had told Jeremiah to stop prophesying in God's name or they would kill him. This also happened before the northern 10 ½ tribes were taken into captivity. (See Micah 2:6)  
Isaiah 30:10 Who say to the seers, "Do not see," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.

22 "therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Behold, I will punish them. **The young men shall die by the sword**, their **sons and their daughters shall die by famine**; 23 'and there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring **catastrophe on the men of Anathoth**, even the year of their punishment."

**2. Specifically, God, the God of Armies, said he would punish the men of Anathoth!**

**3. God would not just destroy the men of Anathoth, but he would destroy their future.**

**Their young men – the ones who would try to be priests** – would be killed. Being a "priest" did not protect them.

**Their children would die by famine.**

Lamentations 4:9 Those slain by the sword are better off Than those who die of hunger; For these pine away, Stricken for lack of the fruits of the field.

**They would be so destroyed, there would not be anyone left in Anathoth.**

The men of Anathoth wanted to destroy Jeremiah with the tree and the fruit, **but God would destroy them by the root and the branches** – a more total destruction.

**4. Lessons:**

**a. God is not unaware of the unfairness in our society.** He sees over-taxation. He sees the state undermining the family by incentivizing singleness. He sees society ignoring true marriage. He sees the state trying to claim children as its property. He sees the state killing innocent children and letting murderers live. He sees churches that turn a blind eye to sin. He sees the damage socialism brings. He sees the oppression of bad capitalism. And he will act. He must act. He hates injustice.

**b. When you see some children suffering, it may be necessary to look at the parents and grandparents to find out why!** Bad parents leave more financial debts to their children than inheritances.

**c. And yet there was someone who would die for those who deserved to die: Jesus himself.**

1 Peter 2:23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, **but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;**

**Conclusion:**

The Jews, even Jeremiah's own clan, threatened him with death because he spoke God's truth and they wanted it shut down. Jeremiah threatened their position and profits by **not saying** what people wanted to hear. So Jeremiah called for God's justice on these wicked people who posed an existential threat to him. Because his request was good, God answered his prayers and promised to bring justice on these wicked men.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord:

**1. There are similar wicked men in the state and the church today who will try to stop you, the people of God, from speaking God's truth - living truth, but you must not stop!**

**2. If you do stop, the church will die.** People won't know what to believe about Jesus and how to live. The lost will be lost! Jesus will not be glorified! His death will be in vain! God will be angry with you.

**3. If you boldly speak the truth, people will know what to believe about Jesus and how to live, the lost will be saved, and Jesus will be glorified.** God will be pleased with you.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, learn the truth about who God is, who you are, and what you need to do to make peace with God. It may make you angry! But this truth is essential. Accepting the truth gives you life!