

## Misplaced Trust

The days of the prophets were dark days indeed, being completely surrounded in sin and lawlessness. Behind them, the people of Judah had left their first love and true God. Currently, they were knee deep in sins and idolatry with no sign of changing, nor any sign of remorse. Ahead of them, destruction and captivity awaited them. This is the context of Jeremiah's message when he said, "*Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these*" (Jer. 7:4). The people of Judah never considered captivity or destruction as reasonable possibilities, because they believed as long as the temple of God stood, Jerusalem would stand. Because of this faulty mindset, Jeremiah warned against false prophets by saying "*They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace*" (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). Jeremiah called the people to turn back to God and place their trust in Him, not in the temple or in some other physical object.

Although Jeremiah's voice seems far removed from us today, the lessons that he taught are as timely as ever. The world ranks "strong" and "weak" churches today based on the number of people that attend. Another big factor that controls the world's view of strength is the size of the contribution offered. Many churches draw in new families by advertising the size of their "youth group" to create a family-friendly atmosphere. While each one of these elements is not wrong in and of themselves, they do not necessarily represent congregational strength. John wrote to the Church at Sardis that they had a reputation among men for being alive, but they were actually dead (Rev. 3:1). Jesus did not address the contribution, the attendance, the so-called "youth group," or any other physical attraction. He attacked their teaching, their failure to repent, their incomplete devotion towards God, and their failure to be watchful for Christ's coming (Rev. 3:2-3). God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and wants to see them added to the church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18), but He does not want people placing their confidence in a number, a size, a preacher, a song service, or a large number of young people. More than anything else, God wants His followers to focus on hearing His word, and keeping His commandments (Matt. 7:21-25; James 1:21-25). Jesus connected obedience with love when He said "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (Jn. 14:15), and again "*Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you*" (Jn. 15:14). While we cannot earn our salvation by keeping a checklist of commands to get our ticket to heaven punched, obedience demonstrates a living and saving faith (1 Thess. 1:3; James 2:14-26). God does not desire a large number of lukewarm followers who have placed their trust in carnal symbols of strength and success (Rev. 3:14-19), but hearts that are truly convicted to serving Him faithfully.

Jeremiah's preaching urged the people to turn back to God and trust in His laws (Jer. 18:8). Their false security in the temple and in Jerusalem pulled their hearts away from God, and we must not follow their example. Our hope and trust must not be in what we see around us, but in God's Word and the promises He has given for those who will follow Him.

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