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Sermon Title: Jeremiah Facing Suffering While Fulfilling His Mission

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Scripture: Jeremiah 26:1-24

(Jeremiah 26:1) At the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord:

(Jeremiah 26:2) "This is what the Lord says: Stand in the courtyard of the Lord's temple and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the Lord's house. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word.

(Jeremiah 26:3) Perhaps they will listen, and each will turn from their evil ways. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done.

(Jeremiah 26:4) Say to them, 'This is what the Lord says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you,

(Jeremiah 26:5) and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened),

(Jeremiah 26:6) then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city a curse among all the nations of the earth."

(Jeremiah 26:7) The priests, the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah speak these words in the house of the Lord.

(Jeremiah 26:8) But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the Lord had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets, and all the people seized him and said, "You must die!

(Jeremiah 26:9) Why do you prophesy in the Lord's name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate and deserted?" And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.

(Jeremiah 26:10) When the officials of Judah heard about these things, they went up from the royal palace to the house of the Lord and took their places at the entrance of the New Gate of the Lord's house.

(Jeremiah 26:11) Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people, "This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears!"

(Jeremiah 26:12) Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard.

(Jeremiah 26:13) Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.

(Jeremiah 26:14) As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right.

(Jeremiah 26:15) Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the Lord has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing."

(Jeremiah 26:16) Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man should not be sentenced to death! He has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God."

(Jeremiah 26:17) Some of the elders of the land stepped forward and said to the entire assembly of the people,

(Jeremiah 26:18) "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah. He told all the people of Judah, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.'

(Jeremiah 26:19) Did Hezekiah king of Judah or anyone else in Judah put him to death? Did not Hezekiah fear the Lord and seek his favor? And did not the

Lord relent, so that he did not bring the disaster he pronounced against them? We are about to bring a terrible disaster on ourselves!"

(Jeremiah 26:20) (Now Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath Jearim was another man who prophesied in the name of the Lord; he prophesied the same things against this city and this land as Jeremiah did.

(Jeremiah 26:21) When King Jehoiakim and all his officers and officials heard his words, the king sought to put him to death. But Uriah heard of it and fled in fear to Egypt.

(Jeremiah 26:22) King Jehoiakim, however, sent Elnathan son of Akbor to Egypt, along with some other men.

(Jeremiah 26:23) They brought Uriah out of Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim, who had him struck down with a sword and his body thrown into the burial place of the common people.)

(Jeremiah 26:24) Furthermore, Ahikam son of Shaphan supported Jeremiah, and so he was not handed over to the people to be put to death.

This chapter reveals the reactions of Judah's officials, priests, prophets, and the people to Jeremiah's sermon in the temple, delivered after receiving God's word (Chapter 7).

The time is identified as the early period of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah (609–598 BC), likely around 605 BC.

The year 605 BC marks the significant event when the Babylonian army, led by Nebuchadnezzar, decisively defeated Pharaoh Necho's Egyptian forces at Carchemish, located on the upper Euphrates.

This victory established Babylon's dominance over the Near East.

Consequently, Judah, which had been a vassal state to Egypt, faced a politically turbulent period where it had no choice but to shift its allegiance from Egypt to Babylon for survival.

Jeremiah stood in the courtyard of the Jerusalem Temple and delivered God's message to the people who had come to worship from all the towns of Judah, without omitting a single word.

(Jeremiah 26:1) At the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord:

(Jeremiah 26:2) "This is what the Lord says: Stand in the courtyard of the Lord's temple and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the Lord's house. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word.

The message God instructed to be delivered to the people of Judah was a warning of judgment against their wickedness due to their disobedience to His word.

This is detailed in chapter 7:

(Jeremiah 7:30) The Lord says, "The people of Judah have done evil in My sight. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears My name and have defiled it.

(Jeremiah 7:31) They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter My mind.

(Jeremiah 7:32) So beware, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when people will no longer call it Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room.

(Jeremiah 7:33) Then the carcasses of this people will become food for the birds and the wild animals, and there will be no one to frighten them away.

(Jeremiah 7:34) I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate."

The temple courtyard, where people upheld a theology of temple-centric worship, was the most dramatic setting to proclaim the destruction of the temple and the city.

These people believed that as long as they worshiped in the temple, they were guaranteed blessings and salvation, without needing to amend their lives.

This location was ideal for reminding them that salvation depends not on the temple or temple worship but on God.

God declares His intention to bring judgment upon the people of Judah, but His true desire is not to destroy them through judgment.

Rather, He wishes to use His warnings to turn them away from their wickedness, bringing them back to Himself so they may avoid judgment and receive salvation.

(Jeremiah 26:3) "Perhaps they will listen, and each will turn from their evil ways. Then I will relent and not inflict on them the disaster I was planning because of their evil deeds."

God sent many prophets to deliver His word and to guide the people of Judah, who had strayed from His ways, back onto the right path.

Yet, they refused to listen.

Even so, God never completely gave up hope for His people.

He was always prepared to reverse His decision if they would only repent and return to Him.

God, holding onto a faint hope that perhaps this time the people of Judah might listen, issues another warning through Jeremiah.

He declares that if they do not obey His words and turn from their ways, the temple in Jerusalem will become like Shiloh, and the city will be left desolate, becoming an object of scorn among all nations.

(Jeremiah 26:4) "Say to them, 'This is what the Lord says: If you do not listen to me and follow my law, which I have set before you,

(Jeremiah 26:5) and if you do not listen to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I have sent to you again and again (though you have not listened), (Jeremiah 26:6) then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city a curse among all the nations of the earth.”

(Jeremiah 26:7) Jeremiah spoke these words in the Lord’s temple, and the priests, the prophets, and all the people heard him.

Before the temple in Jerusalem was built, the tabernacle was located in Shiloh. However, as the priests and many of the people disobeyed God’s commands, He abandoned the tabernacle in Shiloh, which was subsequently destroyed by the Philistines around 1050 BC, leaving the place in ruins.

From the perspective of temple supremacists, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the city was a prophecy that could not possibly be proclaimed in the name of the Lord.

For them, the idea that the holy temple, where God dwells, and Jerusalem, the city He had chosen, could be destroyed and become desolate was utterly unthinkable.

Therefore, to proclaim in the name of the Lord the downfall of His temple and His chosen city was seen as blaspheming the Lord Himself—a sacrilege punishable by death.

As a result, Jeremiah, who prophesied the fall of the city and temple, was regarded as a false prophet who had blasphemed the name of the Lord and, consequently, had to be put to death.

This describes the response of the social leaders, including officials, and the religious leaders, such as priests and prophets, as well as the people of Judah, upon hearing the message of God's judgment delivered by Jeremiah.

The priests, prophets, and the people, instead of repenting after hearing God's word through Jeremiah, sought to seize him and put him to death.

(Jeremiah 26:8) "When Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to say to all the people, the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him and said, 'You must die!'"

(Jeremiah 26:9) 'Why do you prophesy in the name of the Lord, saying, "This temple will be like Shiloh, and this city will be desolate and without inhabitant"?' And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord."

Hearing the commotion that arose in the temple, the officials went up to the temple and sat at the entrance of the new gate of the Lord's temple to set up a court.

The priests and the prophets accused Jeremiah before the officials, claiming that he deserved to die because he had prophesied that the Jerusalem temple and the city would be destroyed and desolate.

They presented the people as witnesses.

(Jeremiah 26:10) "When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the palace to the house of the Lord and took their places at the entrance of the New Gate of the Lord's temple."

(Jeremiah 26:11) The priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people, 'This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.'"

In response to the accusations of the priests and prophets, Jeremiah defends himself before all the of officials and people.

(Jeremiah 26:12) Jeremiah said to all the officials and the people, "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this temple and this city all the things you have heard."

(Jeremiah 26:13) Now, reform your ways and your actions and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you."

Jeremiah acknowledges the charges and reaffirms that his prophecy truly came from God.

He pleads with them once more to repent and listen to God's word, assuring them that if they do so, God will relent and not bring the disaster he had intended.

Jeremiah then speaks about his own fate, saying that the decision is in their hands and advises them to act wisely.

(Jeremiah 26:14) "I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right."

(Jeremiah 26:15) "But be assured of this: If you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and this city and those who live in it, for in truth the Lord has sent me to speak all these words in your hearing."

He warns them that if they kill the prophet whom the Lord has truly sent, they will incur judgment from God.

Jeremiah does not make excuses or act cowardly to save himself; rather, he expresses concern for those who wish to kill him, warning them of the consequences of their actions.

Hearing Jeremiah's defense, the officials and all the people reject the accusations made by the priests and prophets.

(Jeremiah 26:16) "The officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, 'This man should not be sentenced to death; he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.'"

It is a remarkable scene where religious leaders, who should be upholding the truth, oppose it, while government officials and the people stand on the side of truth.

Some elders who were watching the incident rise up to defend Jeremiah.

They present a precedent from a similar case during the reign of King Hezekiah.

(Jeremiah 26:17) "Then some of the elders of the land stood up and spoke to the entire assembly of the people, saying,

(Jeremiah 26:18) 'During the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah, Micah of Moresheth prophesied to all the people of Judah, saying, "This is what the Lord of Hosts says: Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the temple will be a high place overgrown with thickets."

(Jeremiah 26:19) Did King Hezekiah or all of Judah put him to death? No! Hezekiah feared the Lord and pleaded with the Lord, and the Lord relented from the disaster He had declared against them. So we are doing a great evil to ourselves if we put this man to death."

During King Hezekiah's reign, the king and the people did not reject Micah's prophecy, but rather feared the Lord and sought His mercy.

They worked alongside Micah in a religious reform, and as a result, the Lord relented from the judgment He had announced.

The incident of Uriah during the reign of King Jehoiakim is also recalled.

(Jeremiah 26:20) "There was also a man who prophesied in the name of the Lord, Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-Jearim. He prophesied against this city and this land in the same way as Jeremiah,

(Jeremiah 26:21) When King Jehoiakim and all his warriors and officials heard his words, the king sought to kill him. But Uriah heard of it and was afraid, and he fled to Egypt.

(Jeremiah 26:22) Then King Jehoiakim sent men to Egypt, including Elnathan son of Akbor and some other men,

(Jeremiah 26:23) They brought Uriah back from Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim, who had him struck down with a sword and threw his body into the burial place of the common people."

The prophet Uriah, after proclaiming a prophecy similar to that of Jeremiah, fled to Egypt when King Jehoiakim sought to kill him.

King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Achbor along with some men to bring him back, and he was put to death by the sword.

Ultimately, Jeremiah was acquitted and spared from death through the influence of Ahikam, the father of Gedaliah, who had been appointed governor there by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

(Jeremiah 26:24) "Nevertheless, Ahikam son of Shaphan supported Jeremiah, so he was not handed over to the people to be put to death."

Beloved members of Church of God's Dream,

What are your thoughts when you see the astonishing scene where the religious leaders of Judah who should stand for the truth, opposing it, while government officials, a few elders, and some among the people take a stand for the truth?

In contrast, how do you feel when you see Jeremiah, unwavering in the face of death, fulfilling his mission with courage and dignity, even going so far as to show concern for the lives of those who seek to kill him?

Did you know that there is a saying circulating these days: "The church should worry about the world, but instead, the world is worrying about the church"?

This is a mockery directed at the church by the world.

It reflects the lamentable reality that the church, which ought to be concerned about a corrupt world and strive to correct injustice in society, has itself fallen into corruption, becoming a burden to the world.

This is a moment to reflect on our identity once again.

The term "Christian" was originally given to the early church believers who, even under the persecution of the Roman government, boldly proclaimed, "Our King is Jesus Christ," and lived to emulate Him.

As Christians, are you living with Jesus Christ as your King?

As Christians, are you living a life that imitates Jesus Christ?

Let us all follow the example of Jesus Christ and live in obedience to God's Word. Like Jeremiah, let us not fear people but fear only God who has given us our mission, and faithfully fulfill that mission.