

## 41. Defining a Pattern of Apostasy (Jeremiah 1–3, 7, 16–18, 20)

Scriptural patterns from the past serve as a sure guide to how things will pan out in the future, especially at the end of the world. Names may change and circumstances may vary, but “the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). In the history of his people, God has provided “a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived” (Doctrine & Covenants 52:14). If there will be an “end of the world”—of the current telestial order—it will be on account of its inhabitants’ iniquity being full or no longer redeemable collectively by an appeal to repentance. In the case of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets, it is the wickedness of God’s covenant people that acts as the catalyst of a worldwide calamity.

As with Israel’s Northern Kingdom of the Ten Tribes, whose people were slain or taken captive by Assyria, so with Israel’s Southern Kingdom of the Jews, who were slain or taken captive by Babylon. In either case, God raised up a world power from the North that conquered the ancient world and wasted his people (Jeremiah 1:13–15; cf. Isaiah 14:31). The pattern is the same: when his people apostatize, God raises up a militaristic power that succeeds in conquering the world and slaying or taking captive his covenant people. As with Lehi in the Book of Mormon, God saves only a small remnant from disaster: those who have the spirit of prophecy. Among these was Jeremiah himself as we learn from his being taken to Egypt and his subsequent fabled journey to Ireland.

What was the wickedness the prophet complained of that might serve as a type and shadow of the wickedness of God’s end-time people? Says Jeremiah: “They that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit” (Jeremiah 2:8); “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods” (Jeremiah 2:11); “Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee” (Jeremiah 2:19); “Where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods” (Jeremiah 2:28).

In spite of God’s people “changing gods” from the God of Israel whom they no longer knew to the false gods of the world—wealth, fashions, power, popularity, and so forth—they nevertheless assumed they were still righteous: “Thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned” (Jeremiah 2:35). Wasn’t this the same response Laman and Lemuel gave in Jeremiah’s day when they declared: “We know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, and all his commandments, according to the law of Moses; wherefore, we know that they are a righteous people; and our father hath judged them” (1 Nephi 17:22)?

Isn’t that the same kind of response people get today should they question whether we as a church have need to repent—that all isn’t what appears or what comes down from the pulpit?

Can we as a people truly say we haven't changed gods, that we are living the fulness of the gospel not only its basic principles, so that we verily *know* the Lord personally, not just know about him? When we compare our lifestyle today with the lives of the saints of the gospel's restoration, can we say that our sacrifices equal theirs, that revelations and miracles from God among us match theirs, or that our religion hasn't morphed into a shadow of what it once was because the cares of the world have diverted us from the things of God?

Rather, our sins today have an uncanny resemblance to those in Jeremiah's day on the eve of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of the ancient world: adultery, fornication, casual divorce and remarriage, idolatry, false worship, theft, graft, lying words, defamation, temple unworthiness, forgetting God, forsaking God, getting rich, worshiping the works of men's hands, perverting the right way of the Lord, following the imaginations of the heart, walking in false paths, bearing false witness, following human counsel, trusting in the arm of flesh, persecuting the righteous, and so forth (Jeremiah 3:1–3, 21; 7:4, 8–11; 16:20; 17:5, 11, 13, 18, 20; 18:12, 15; 20:10–11).

Covenant curses that overtake God's people as a consequence of these transgressions take the form of suffering rejection, dismay, shame, drought, famine, lack of joy, wretchedness, execration, fear, agony, no peace, war, evils, scattering, disinheritance, desolation, death, captivity, bereavement, defeat, destruction, terror, dispossession, falling prey to wild animals, receiving no burial, etc. (Jeremiah 3:3; 7:15, 33–34; 16:4–5, 9; 17:13; 18:11, 16–17, 21; 20:4–5).

As a type of God's end-time servant, Jeremiah suffers persecution and opposition to his mission of calling God's people to repent on the eve of a great calamity: "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten" (Jeremiah 20:7–11; cf. Isaiah 50:4–11; 52:13–15).

In the end, the Lord gives his people "into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword" (Jeremiah 20:4). Jeremiah's pattern of God's people's apostasy thus resembles Isaiah's and contains many scriptural precedents.