

“Who’s Right and Who’s Wrong?”—Jeremiah 28:5-9

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Who’s Right and Who’s Wrong?”, is Jeremiah 28:5-9 → *Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD, and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. Yet hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

The haunting question in daily conversations seems to be: “Who’s right and who’s wrong?” Of course, there are some who feel the answer to this question is obvious. The woman is always right!

In the midst of all our conversations with the expression of so many

opinions, it's interesting how one determines who's right and who's wrong. What is the basis or foundation upon which you consider the information you receive or convey to be right or wrong? For some that basis is a written law which makes life very "black or white." For others, that basis has to do with an experience which they feel has taught them an important lesson in life. Many determine right or wrong by the demands of a situation or circumstance and the choices involved for an individual.

Sadly many base their concepts of right and wrong on what they want to hear at the moment, not necessarily what they need to hear at that moment. That's why it's so easy to seek out people who will listen to us gripe and complain about something and then validate our feelings in such a manner as to make us feel like we're in the right and justified for our behavior! Unfortunately, many times we end up being validated in wrong and destructive behaviors and ideals!

Our text records an interaction between two prophets—Jeremiah and Hananiah. Jeremiah had the difficult task given him by Yahweh to preach judgment, destruction, disaster and eventually slavery in exile to God's people. Wow! Who would want that "job?" Because sinners do not like to be told they're wrong, such a "job" will meet with much opposition!

However, when you turn away from the LORD in disobedience, that's very serious because it has eternal consequences. God doesn't want

people to go to hell so He sends His prophet to call people to repent or else judgment will come upon them. Even the purpose of the judgment is to get the people to be humbled so they will finally turn to the LORD in repentance and listen to what He has to say in their lives, instead of what their itching ears want to hear in their sinfulness!

Many times the prophets used “action prophecies”—kind of like object lessons. During Jeremiah’s time the king of Babylon had carried off many Israelites from Jerusalem into captivity in Babylon. There were some, including Jeremiah and Hananiah, who were still left in Jerusalem, ruled by the king of Babylon. Jeremiah was instructed by Yahweh to take a big yoke used for oxen, walk around with this yoke on his neck and prophecy about the people staying under the yoke of slavery in Babylon.

However, while Jeremiah was preaching a continued stay in Babylon for God’s people, Hananiah was preaching a quick deliverance for them. As the interaction between Jeremiah and Hananiah took place, the people had to figure out who was right and who was wrong because they were both very convincing.

Hananiah was actually a false prophet who was claiming the right to speak in the name of Yahweh. Hananiah said in Jeremiah 28:2-3 → *Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Yahweh’s house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of*

Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. Hananiah was giving the people a false sense of hope and security in their sin. In a very dramatic way he predicted the return of the Israelites from slavery as Jeremiah 28:10-11 describes: *Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke-bars from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet and broke them. And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, “Thus says Yahweh: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within two years.”* In the midst of such a dramatic scene, who’s right and who’s wrong?

However, at a time when Yahweh was performing His disciplinary work in the lives of His people, peace was not the right word. It’s not that Yahweh has something against peace. He is described in the Scriptures as the God of peace. **Rather, He has something against those who profess to give His message when it really isn’t His message at all!** It is a misuse of His name in a breaking of the 2nd Commandment!

Jeremiah, on the other hand, was Yahweh’s true prophet and also claimed the right of saying: “Thus says Yahweh!”—but with a different message. While proclaiming Yahweh’s deliverance in Jeremiah 29:10, he proclaimed a longer stay in exile: *For thus says Yahweh: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you My promise and bring you back to this place.* The captivity would last seventy years, not two years.

It's not that Jeremiah wanted to have a seventy year stay in slavery in Babylon. He even gives that impression in verse 6 of our text when he said: *Amen! May Yahweh do so; may Yahweh make the words you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of Yahweh, and all the exiles.* If God does what Hannaniah says, great! However, even though God's message through Jeremiah to His people of a seventy year stay may not have been what anyone wanted to hear, it was still the true and proper message that Jeremiah **had** to proclaim. Unfortunately, it took the people that long to come to their senses, recognize their hard-heartedness and their sin, repent and turn to the LORD!

The question the people had to answer was: "Who's right and who's wrong?" It's the same question we ask whenever we experience different teachings, opinions, advice and philosophies on a daily basis. Discerning who's right and who's wrong is especially difficult when someone is so convincing with their message. It becomes more difficult when combined with the fact that we like to hear what we want to hear in our sinfulness.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 describes our dilemma: *The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.* Brothers

and sisters in Christ, the time has come! Daily we are faced with trying to determine who's right and who's wrong! The danger of turning away *from listening to the truth and wandering off into myths* is that it denies the Person & Work of Jesus Who said in John 14:6, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*

When we channel our confusions into areas other than God's Word and Will to get the right answers for our lives, we get ourselves into more trouble. Think of all the places where people go to find answers for their lives: mediums, horoscopes, psychics, those who consult the dead, philosophers, famous people, and the list is endless. There all kinds of places where people who are seriously looking for the answers in their lives go and many of them lead into more trouble because actually they're turning away from the LORD, whether they realize it or not!

The prophet Isaiah described it in Isaiah 8:19-22 → *When they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and*

*darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness. He is using *greatly distressed and hungry* to describe their spiritual hunger for answers in their lives because they don't have the light of truth to guide them. They are living in the spiritual darkness. If we search in the wrong places to find the truth, we will be taken further away from Yahweh.*

When it comes to prophecy, "hindsight is better than foresight." Jeremiah pointed this out in verse 9 of our text when he said: *When the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet.* Jeremiah was simply reiterating God's Word from Deuteronomy 18:21-22 → *If you say in your heart, "How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?"—when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.*

Who's right and who's wrong? God is always right and He will reveal that He is right—**always**!! Jesus faced the same struggles as the true prophets of God had faced so many years before Him. When accused of being a fake and being the servant of the devil, Yahweh confirmed His Person & Work through His resurrection! God was right!! Jesus was right!!

As baptized children of God our understanding of what's right or

wrong should not depend upon what our “itchy ears” want to hear at a given moment. Our faith is directed toward Yahweh Who reveals to us what’s right and wrong in His written Word!

As Jeremiah appealed to the LORD’s timeless and authoritative Word, so we must also test what we hear according to that same Word. He appealed to the prophets who preceded him *from ancient times*. How did he know about the prophets *from ancient times*? He was referring to what he knew from the written Word of God—the Scriptures. That’s how he tested the messages and teachings he received from others.

You must always remember that God’s ways of acting are not necessarily your ways. If you insist that He act and think your way you run into the struggle of expecting Yahweh to give you the answers that **you want to hear**. Rather, Yahweh says in [Isaiah 55:8-9](#) → *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.*

For the baptized child of the LORD, the answer to the question “Who’s right and who’s wrong?” clings to God’s ways—even if it doesn’t match up to your thinking. This is humble and submissive faith. That’s how God defined His relationship with His people in Jeremiah’s day and that’s His definition of your relationship with Him today as well. In humility and submission we confess our finiteness in the midst of His holy presence

because we know that He's right and we're wrong. We confess our sins based upon His righteousness in the Person & Work of Jesus. The search for who's right and who's wrong takes us to the cross and the open tomb, revealed to us in His written Word!

When you view things from God's ways as revealed in His written Word, then you will trust His will to be accomplished **in His time**, no matter how it "matches up" to your own way of thinking. You will confess with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Not My will but Your will be done." In the meantime, we strive to do what we know is His Will according to His written Word because He has fulfilled that Word in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ, Who is *the way, and the truth, and the life*. We recognize that our lives are a constant faith walk where we search for and trust God based upon His written Word. He is **always** righteous! Amen.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding
guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus
unto life everlasting. Amen.