

THE ROD AND THE SEETHING POT

TEXT: JEREMIAH 1:11-19

INTRODUCTION:

1. Last week we looked at God's call to the prophet Jeremiah, and we gave particular attention to his message (1:10).
2. Tonight, we will look at the first two visions that the LORD gave to Jeremiah -- the vision of the rod of an almond tree (1:11, 12), and the vision of the seething pot (1:13).
3. These interesting visions were given to prepare Jeremiah for the "principal errand he was to go upon, which was to foretell the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans" (Matthew Henry).
4. This judgment was due because of "their wickedness," particularly their idolatry (1:16).

I. THE ROD OF CORRECTION (1:11, 12).

1. Proverbs 22:15 refers to "the rod of correction." In Scripture, the "rod" often represents correction, chastisement, and judgment.
2. In Exodus 7:19, we read, "And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood."
3. Second Samuel 7:14 says, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men."
4. Twice Job refers to God's rod of correction, in Job 9:34 and 21:9.
5. There are many other references to the rod of correction throughout the Psalms, Proverbs, and the different prophets.
6. And there are three references in the book of Revelation to the Lord Jesus Christ ruling the nations "with a rod of iron."
7. God used Assyria to judge Israel. Isaiah 10:5 says, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation."
8. And so, in 722 BC the Assyrians conquered Israel. This was because of the wickedness of the people of the northern kingdom of Israel.
9. That should have been a warning to the people of the southern kingdom of Judah, but they did not repent so God was going to use a different rod to judge Judah. This time it would not be Assyria, but Babylon.
10. Jeremiah tried to warn the people of Jerusalem but they would not listen. Hebrew scholars tell us that the Hebrew word translated "almond tree"

(1:11) literally means "awake." The almond tree blossomed around January, and was the first tree to awaken from the long winter.

11. Jeremiah was like that almond tree. It was his job to wake the people up. They were dead spiritually. They were cold and backslidden. Therefore, Jeremiah was given a strong message to deliver from the LORD.

II. THE SEETHING POT (1:13-16)

1. "Seething" means "boiling over with anger." That is why many of the other Bible versions translate it as a "boiling pot." God's anger and wrath was getting ready to boil over.
2. These visions and prophecies remind us that though the nations rage, God is in control of the nations, and He uses them to accomplish His own purposes.
3. Isaiah 10:5 says, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation." In this case, the rod of God's anger would not be Assyria, but Babylon.
4. The seething pot was a picture of the dangerous Babylonian army, which would soon pour into the land of Judah, spilling over and scorching the people of Judah.
5. Matthew Henry said, "It had been long designed by the justice of God, and long deserved by the sin of the people, and yet hitherto the divine patience had restrained it, and held it in, as it were; the enemies had intended it, and God had checked them; but now all restraints shall be taken off, and the *evil shall break forth*; the direful scene shall open, and the enemy shall come in like a flood. It shall be a universal calamity; it shall come *upon all the inhabitants of the land*, from the highest to the lowest, for they have all corrupted their way."
6. Here in chapter 1, Jeremiah does not mention Babylon by name. He simply says they shall come from "out of the north" (1:13, 14, 15).
7. Later on, Babylon is specifically identified. Jeremiah 20:4 says, "I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword."
8. At the time of Jeremiah's prophecy, Babylon was not the great world empire it would soon become. At the time of this prophecy, Assyria was the dominant power in that part of the world.
9. But Jeremiah's prophecy was literally fulfilled over 40 years later, and we read in Chapter 39 that, "In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it" (39:1).

III. THE PROTECTED PROPHET (1:17-19)

1. Jeremiah's message was not well received. Consequently he was misunderstood, shamefully mistreated by his countrymen, and thrown into a dungeon.
2. The LORD prepared Jeremiah for this abuse by telling him, "be not afraid" and "be not dismayed at their faces" (1:8, 17; cf. 5:3).
3. "For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee" (1:19; cf. 1:8).
4. The prophet Ezekiel, who was a contemporary of Jeremiah, had to deal with the same problem of preaching to a hostile audience (cf. Ezek. 3:7-9).
5. However, Ezekiel started prophesying later, after the people of Judah had already gone into exile in Babylon.
6. The LORD protected Jeremiah -- "For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land..." (1:18).
7. No one likes to preach about the judgment of God, but we must preach the Word of God without compromise. The apostle Paul said in Acts 20:27, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
8. Paul told young Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:2-4).
9. Paul could preach boldly because the Lord was with him. Later in that same chapter he told Timothy, "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me" (II Timothy 4:17).
10. The LORD also stood with Jeremiah and strengthened him (Jer. 1:18, 19).

CONCLUSION:

A number of years ago, evangelist Oliver B. Greene said, "There is no need to blame Hollywood and the liquor crowd for the mess in which we find the world today. The blame lies at the doorsteps of sissy, compromising, back-scratching, ear-tickling, 'denomination-pecked' preachers who know the truth yet refuse to preach it for fear that they might hurt someone's feelings... Poor Jeremiah would have a hard time getting a church in the 'machine' of today. Every sermon he preached was on backsliding and judgment. 'Judgment! Judgment! Judgment!' was his text...They put Preacher Jeremiah in a pit, but God removed him. I would much rather be in a pit for God's glory than to be on a pedestal and be compromising with a bunch of liberals and dancing to the music of some denominational machine."

