

The Prophets

Falls International Baptist Institute

Class Eight: Jeremiah – Part One

Text: Jeremiah 1:1-10

Introduction: to begin our study of the book of Jeremiah, let us review what we learned in Old Testament Survey. **Jeremiah** is the twenty-fourth book on the Bible and the second of the Prophets. The prophet, Jeremiah, authored this book with the exception of chapter 52. **Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet.** His ministry spanned more than forty years from 627 to 580 BC. Jeremiah was from the city of Anathoth which was about two miles south of Jerusalem. His father was Hilkaiah, the priest. It is very interesting to note that Jeremiah was called to be a prophet before he was born according to Jeremiah 1:5 *“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”* Jeremiah was a persecuted prophet by his own people. He prophesied of the coming judgment of God upon the southern kingdom of Judah by Babylon. In fact, he prophesied about Babylon’s conquering Judah so much so, that Babylon is referred to at least 164 times. His countrymen viewed him as being unpatriotic with his allegiance to Babylon. He prophesied specifically that the Babylonian Captivity would last for seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11-14; 29:10). In fact, the prophet Daniel said in Daniel 9:2 *“In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”* Jeremiah dictated his writings to his secretary, Baruch the scribe. He communicated God’s message through parables, sermons, and object lessons. But Jeremiah’s message was not just a message of judgment: In Jeremiah 31, God used Jeremiah to prophesy of a New Covenant that God would make for His People, the nation of Israel. Though judgment was falling because of sin, mercy would be extended through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ! Jeremiah 18-19 are probably the most famous chapters in the book as Jeremiah visits the Potters House and God uses that to give an object lesson to the nation of Israel.

I. The Life and Times of Jeremiah

- A. *“Jeremiah’s father Hilkaiah was a priest as was his father before him, and the younger Jeremiah was also expected to serve at the altar...Jeremiah was born during the reign of King Manasseh, the most evil man who ever reigned over the kingdom of Judah (II Kings 21:1-18). The son of godly Hezekiah, Manasseh came to the throne when only twelve years old, and the officials around him easily influenced him to idolatry. ‘Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel’ (verse 9). When Manasseh died, his evilson Amon continued his father’s evil practices. Thus Jeremiah grew up in Anathoth at a time when idolatry flourished in Judah, children were offered in sacrifice to idols, the Law of Moses was disregarded and disobeyed, and it looked as though there was no hope for the nation. Godly priests were not greatly appreciated.” – Warren Wiersbe*

- B. Amon only ruled for two years and was assassinated. After Amon's death, his young son, Josiah became king. Josiah was a good, godly king who reigned for thirty-one years. He was the last good king that Judah would have. And this is where the book of Jeremiah begins: *"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign."* *"Josiah was quite young when he began to reign but he had godly counselors like Hilkiah, and thus he sought the LORD. In the twelfth year of his reign, he began to purge the land of idolatry; six years later, he commanded the priests and workers to repair and cleanse the temple. It was during that time that Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law in the Temple and had it read to the king... When the king heard the Law of God read, he was deeply moved. He tore his robes and sent to Huldah the prophetess for instruction from the LORD (II Kings 22). Her message was that the people had forsaken God and therefore judgment was coming, but because of Josiah's sincere repentance, judgment would not come during his reign."* – Warren Wiersbe

- C. **Jeremiah was called by the LORD away from the priesthood to the ministry of a prophet in the thirteenth year of King Josiah.** Jeremiah was more than likely between the ages of 17-20 at this time. When the LORD called him in Jeremiah 1:4-5, *"Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations"*, Jeremiah objected to God's call because of youthfulness. He said in verse 6, *"Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child."* Like Moses of old, and many today, he had his excuses on why he could not possibly be the one whom God was calling. But God never makes a mistake in His choices. **Notice the following concerning the calling and consecration of God:**

1. **God is Sovereign in His Creation of a Man.** *"Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee."*
2. **God is Sovereign in His Consecration of a Man:** *"and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee."*
3. **God is Sovereign in His Calling of a Man:** *"I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."*

But then, notice his feeble excuse:

1. *"I cannot"*: while that is true pertaining to our flesh, if God calls you, then you can.
2. *"I cannot speak"*: It is not our words that God will use: it is His. Note verse 7b: *"whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak."* And again verse 9 *"Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."*
3. *"For I am a child"*: it is true; he was a very young man. So have many of those who have evidenced the calling of God upon their

lives. Notice God's answer in verse 7a: "*But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child.*" In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul told young Timothy "*Let no man despise thy youth.*" I Timothy 4:12a

After Jeremiah was touched by God, God told Jeremiah his purpose in calling him: verse 10 says "*See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.*" Then God gave Jeremiah two visions: a vision of the rod of an almond tree. The almond tree is the first tree to bud in the Holy Land and it buds in January. It signifies that spring is coming. And so, God was giving Jeremiah a vision to illustrate that His judgment was coming. What the budding tree was to the Springtime, Jeremiah's prophecies would be to God's Judgment. The second vision was that of a pot with the front of it in the north but tipping toward the south. The significance of this vision was that although Assyria had been the world power and the major threat against Judah, God would use the nation of Babylon to the north to pour out His judgment on Judah to the south. Let me tell you: that message would not be deemed popular nor patriotic to Jerusalem and Judah! But it was God's message and Jeremiah would faithfully proclaim it until the nation ended up in Babylonian captivity.

D. Jeremiah is known as "the weeping prophet".

1. Jeremiah 4:19-21 "*My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?"*
2. Jeremiah 8:18, 21 "*When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me... For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me."*
3. Jeremiah 9:1-2, 10 "*Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men... For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone."*
4. Jeremiah 13:17 "*But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive."*

5. Jeremiah 14:17 *“Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.”*

Baxter said *“Jeremiah is one of the bravest, tenderest, and most pathetic figures in history.”* Dr. Moorehead said *“It was Jeremiah’s lot to prophesy at a time when all things in Judah were rushing down to the final and mournful catastrophe; when political excitement was at its height; when the worst passions swayed the various parties; and the most fatal counsels prevailed; ... to see his own people, whom he loved with the tenderness of a woman, plunge over the precipice into the wide, weltering ruin.”* Dr. G. Campbell Morgan comments: *“In the story of Jeremiah’s shrinking and pain and tears we have a picture of a man in such perfect fellowship with God that through him God was able to reveal His own suffering in the presence of sin.”* Jeremiah would also write the next prophetic book: Lamentations. The name itself speaks of the heart of Jeremiah over the condition of his people in Jerusalem and Judah.

- E. *“After a fruitful thirty-one-year reign, Josiah died. A weeping prophet attended his funeral. Judah’s last good king had gone and it would be downhill spiritually from that point on.”* – Wilmington
- Jeremiah pleaded with Judah to return to God while pronouncing the coming judgment of God upon Judah by the Babylonians. The weeping prophet became a warning prophet as he preached and told Judah exactly how harsh God’s judgment would be upon them. The people ridiculed, mocked, and ultimately rejected his message. Because of his preaching against his own nation, Jeremiah was persecuted by his own family: *(For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee”* Chapter 12:6. He was whipped and put in stocks in chapter 20:1-3. He was threatened by King Jehoiakim in chapter 28:21-24. He was whipped again and accused of treason in chapter 37:11-16. His twenty-three years’ worth of prophecies were pen-knifed and burned by the king. **At one point, Jeremiah got so frustrated because absolutely no one was repenting and getting right with God that he determined to quit preaching:** *“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.”*
- F. Jeremiah preached so much to the remaining three kings (Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah) of the impending Babylonian captivity that he was in prison when Nebuchadnezzar overthrew Jerusalem and Judah. But God blessed Jeremiah’s faithfulness by having King Nebuchadnezzar free him. Jeremiah 39:11-12 says *“Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.”* Jeremiah began to help the newly

appointed governor named Gedaliah. Gedaliah was assassinated by a man named Ishmael, after which the captain of the forces, Johanan, became the governor. Johanan brings the leaders of the people to Jeremiah and asks for Jeremiah to tell them what to do as they are afraid that Nebuchadnezzar will come and kill them because of Gedaliah's assassination. When Jeremiah tells them not to flee to Egypt, they rebelled again and went to Egypt. They forcibly carried Jeremiah with them. Jeremiah spent the remaining years of his life prophesying against nine Gentile nations, concluding with God's judgment on Babylon.

- G. Historians tell us that Jeremiah's countrymen stoned him to death in Egypt. This would certainly correspond with the words of Jesus Christ in Luke 11:47-51 and 13:33-34. Jeremiah was a prophet who was faithful unto death!