

The Call of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:1–19)

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Introduction

1. Background of Jeremiah's chronicles
 - a. Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah, was probably the high priest during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22:4).
 - b. It was Hilkiah who discovered the book of the law during the repair of temple (2 Kings 22:8).
 - c. This book of the law was discovered five years after Jeremiah's call to the ministry.
 - d. Jeremiah's uncle Shallum was married to Huldah the prophetess, of whom Josiah inquired after finding the book of the law (2 Chronicles 34:19–28).
 - e. Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, protected Jeremiah from the people who wanted him put to death (Jeremiah 26:24; 39:14).
 - f. These men—Hilkiah, Ahikam, Abdon, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant—were part of the holy remnant who knew the ways of the Lord and walked in the light they had, serving the Lord in the hour of Judah's decadence and judgment. We need to be such people in our day.
2. Jeremiah preached to Judah for forty years, his messages were recorded and preserved by Baruch, a scribe.
 - a. The first chapter is a preface to the collected and chronicled Word of the Lord from Jeremiah's mouth.
 - b. The Lord called the man whom He prepared to do His work in the dark days of Judah's apostasy.
 - c. This introductory chapter demonstrates that no matter how dark the days, the Lord sovereignly raises up His witnesses to testify against the evil of them.

I. The Call

1. The revelation of the sovereign Lord
 - a. His foreknowledge of Jeremiah ("*I knew you,*" v. 5) *Foreknowledge* is much more than knowing something in the future; it is the action of the sovereignty of God in choosing people to salvation and service (Romans 8:28–30).
 - b. His creative work in Jeremiah's existence ("*I formed you,*" v. 5)
 - c. His preparatory work ("*I consecrated you*" v. 5). The Hebrew term means to set apart as holy—belonging to the Lord and made for special use.
 - d. The purpose for Yahweh's sovereign work in Jeremiah was to appoint him to the special work of receiving and delivering His message to the nations. There are two kinds of prophets: those who *receive* and *proclaim* the Word of God, and (2) those who merely preach what was revealed.
2. Jeremiah, confronted with the awful majesty of God and His glorious revelation, answered with appropriate humility (v. 6).
 - a. Jeremiah's response was not one of unwillingness but of weakness.
 - b. Some compare Jeremiah's response to that of Moses (Exodus 3:10 ff.). Unlike Moses, Jeremiah did not argue with the Lord. Moses' reluctance provoked the Lord's *anger* (Exodus 3:14); Jeremiah merely stated his disqualification, his youth.
3. Instead of rebuking Jeremiah, the Lord assured him of His purpose to use the youth and protect him in that work.
 - a. The Lord's *sending* of Jeremiah was all the qualification he needed.

- b. Further, Jeremiah's authority to preach was based on the Lord's *commandment* of him to do so.
 - c. His message would not be welcomed, but Jeremiah need not fear his audience because his task was supported by the Lord's promised presence to *protect* and to *deliver* His servant.
4. The Lord confirmed His call by two supernatural things.
- a. The Lord touched Jeremiah's mouth, putting His words in Jeremiah's mouth.
 This was more than a simple confirmation; it was a declaration that Jeremiah's message had divine authority as the very Word of God. Jeremiah would be God's instrument to accomplish a powerful work with worldwide implications. Again, look at what Jeremiah was called to accomplish: "*Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.*" The words that God put in Jeremiah's mouth, along with others, are right here in your Bible! We are to use the Word of God to the same ends.
 - b. The Lord, then, gave the prophet a vision, asking, "*What do you see?*" The word *almond* in the Hebrew sounds like *watch*. The Lord declared that it was He, not Jeremiah, who was overseeing the success of the Word preached. It was the Lord who would perform all that the prophet proclaimed.

II. The Commission

1. The Lord gave Jeremiah a second vision—a boiling caldron in the north facing Judah to the south.
 - a. *Evil* was brewing there that would have dire consequences for Judah. Nations were struggling for world dominance, as documented by Daniel; Syria, Assyria, and Babylon would war with each other and boil over, affecting the land of Judah. As then, so now.
 - b. All national and international upheaval and struggle is providentially designed by the Sovereign Lord to bring about His eternal purposes.
2. The Lord was using this disaster (evil) of Gentile kingdoms to judge the apostasy (evil) of Judah, which, in turn, would bring about a new Messianic age and the introduction of the kingdom of God.
 - a. The Lord declared Judah's evil. To repeat from last week's message: Judah's self-deceived perception of her status as God's people blinded her to her own sinful abandonment of love and loyalty to God.
 - b. God was about to judge Judah for her sins against Him. Judah's great evil was in forsaking Her God for the gods of those nations God was using to judge her. Many believers forsake the Lord by ignoring His church and giving themselves over to their own affairs (Jeremiah 1:16).
 - c. Jeremiah is then charged with the task to which he was called (v. 17). Many are satisfied to know they are called to serve, but they never gird themselves and serve. The people would fight against the prophet but would not succeed in silencing him.

What to Take Away

1. Like Hilkiyah, Ahikam, Abdon, Shaphan, Asaiah, and Jeremiah, the church today is also to be a holy remnant, representing the Lord in this evil age. As these men of old, do we know the ways of the Lord, and do we walk in the light of His Word, serving the Lord with our whole being? Sadly, many have succumbed to Satan's devices and have devoted themselves to that which does not survive to eternity.
2. Believers are *called*, like Jeremiah, to be His *witnesses* for Christ and His gospel and against the evils that surround them (Isaiah 43:10).
3. God's kingdom building continues unabated. Are you in? If so, just where do you fit into His scheme to fight against the world and demonstrate the glories of that kingdom in these final hours of human history?