

Journey through Jeremiah Part 1 – An Introduction

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, December 21, 2016

Jeremiah 1:1-10

- 1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:
- 2 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.
- 3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.
- 4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
- 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.
- 6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.
- 7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.
- 8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.
- 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.
- 10 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.

As we begin a new Sermon series from the Book of Jeremiah, we need to cover some basic things concerning this book.

1. There are 52 Chapters in the Book of Jeremiah, 1364 verses and 42,654 words, making it the 2nd longest Book of the Bible. It is 50 words shy of tying the Book of Psalms which is the longest book of the Bible.
2. The Acts Bible study that we just finished took us 61 weeks. It only had 24,229 words so we are looking at 18,425 more words in Jeremiah, meaning it will take us approximately 2-years to complete this study.
3. The human penman of the Book of Jeremiah is none other than Jeremiah himself. That is evident from reading the very first verse.
4. Jeremiah is known as “**The Weeping Prophet**.” The reason being is his writings such as found in **Jeremiah 9:1: 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!** And of course his writings in the Book of Lamentations, which literally means “*weeping and mourning*.”
5. Other prophets during Jeremiah’s time were: Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel.
6. Jeremiah’s ministry lasted through 5 different Kings before the inhabitants of Judah were carried off into Babylonian captivity; Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, Jehoahaz, and Jehoiachin.
7. One of the hardest parts of understanding the Book of Jeremiah is the fact that it was not written in chronological order, so you can’t just move through it as we did in the Book of Acts which is written in chronological order and expect it to read like a story book.

There are many other unique features of this Book but let’s just go ahead and dive into the Scriptures and we will discuss more of the uniqueness as we go along.

1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:

Jeremiah – his name means “**Jah will rise**.” He was the son of a man named Hilkiah. Now, we cannot prove it but it is very likely that his dad, Hilkiah, was the same Hilkiah that was the High Priest during the reign of King Josiah. Remember he was the one that found the Book of the Law that was in the rubble in the Temple. **2 Kings 22:8: And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.** It would make sense that he would be Jeremiah’s father but again we cannot say for certain.

Jeremiah was a priest in the land of Benjamin. It says he came from **Anathoth in the land of Benjamin**. Anathoth is 3 miles North East of Jerusalem. There were a couple other famous men from the Tribe of Benjamin; King Saul the first King of Israel, and Saul of Tarsus whom we know as the Apostle Paul.

2 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.

Jeremiah is called to be a prophet of the LORD in the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah which would have been approximately 626 B.C. King Josiah was one of the great kings of Judah whom the Bible has good things to say about, unlike his father, Amon, and his grandfather, Manasseh, both whom the Bible says did evil in the sight of God.

3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

Then we are told that Jeremiah was a prophet under the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, both sons of Josiah. Unfortunately both of those sons were evil kings. There were also 2 other kings during Jeremiah’s time that are not mentioned here; (Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin), who reigned only three months each. You can read about them in (2 Kings 23:31 and 2 Kings 24:8).

All together Jeremiah had a 40-41 year ministry as a prophet, even after the fall of Jerusalem and the taking of the Jews into captivity. He also prophesied in Egypt. So his entire ministry could have spanned 50-years.

4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 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.

One of the most famous passages of Scripture where Jeremiah is informed by God that he was chosen to be a prophet while he was still in his mother’s womb. That is enough fact right there to outlaw all abortion. Jeremiah was ordained a prophet before he was even born. Isn’t it amazing the way that God works? I’m glad that Jeremiah’s mother didn’t practice the sin of abortion. I can only imagine how many babies have been murdered over the years that could have went on to do great things for God.

Notice the 4 things that God did to Jeremiah while in the womb:

1. He formed him.
2. He knew him.
3. He sanctified him.
4. He ordained him.

It says that he was ordained “a prophet unto the nations.” His message wasn’t just to his people in Judah, Jeremiah would be the man that God used to speak to all of the nations.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

The word “*Ah*” right here is an expression of shock or surprise. Jeremiah is a young man and not experienced with the things the Lord is telling him that he is going to do. So the first thing he does is say “**I cannot speak.**” He doesn’t mean that when he opens his mouth nothing comes out, he means that he doesn’t have the ability to prophecy, to preach. He knows that the Prophets of Israel are men that stand and speak boldly. He is not experienced in that and has never done it before.

I’m reminded of Moses when God called him, the first thing he said was “*I am not eloquent, and am of slow speech and a slow tongue.*” (Exodus 4:10) My friend a divine calling from God is a very frightening thing. Your natural instincts causes you to push back and declare that you are unworthy of such a calling. I know that’s how I felt when the Lord called me to preach.

Jeremiah also tells the LORD, “for I am a child.” There is nothing in Scriptures that tells us how old Jeremiah was when he was called. You can read a hundred different commentaries and get a hundred different opinions on how old he was. Some believe him to be a teenager, perhaps 14 or 15 years old while some believe him to be any age below 25, and yet others claim he was at least 30-years old.

I am not going to guess how old he was but I want us to rather think of his statement of being that he is a young man and not experienced in doing what the Lord has called him to do. It could be an expression such as we use when we say “*a babe in Christ.*” That doesn’t mean someone is a little baby it means they are immature in the ways of Christ. No matter what his age is he is using it for an excuse as to why he doesn’t think he will be able to do the job of a prophet. But that is not going to hold up in front of the LORD.

7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Here we see that the LORD sets Jeremiah straight just as he did Moses when he made excuses. He tells him that he will speak whatsoever He commands him to.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

The LORD also tells him not be afraid of the people he would be prophesying to. He assures him that He would deliver him. It is a terrifying thing to think of being a younger person and bringing an authoritative word to people that are older than you. I remember when I first started preaching as a young man and it would always make me nervous to preach to a congregation that was mostly older than I was. But the LORD would always do the preaching through me and once I started preaching I never thought about it again. The truth is, if the Word is coming from God it doesn’t matter how young or old the messenger is.

In Jeremiah’s case though, he is going to meet much resistance to the message he is going to be preaching. The people are not going to want to hear what he has to say because he is going to be warning them of the coming persecution. The LORD promised Jeremiah that he would deliver him.

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.

Now we see how Jeremiah is able to preach the Word of God even though he “**cannot speak**” and is a “**child**” and doesn’t have the experience. The LORD put his words in Jeremiah’s mouth. This symbol of the LORD putting forth his hand and touching Jeremiah’s lips is much the same as he did with Daniel.

In my Sunday school class we have been studying through the Book of Daniel and we talked about his just this past Sunday. Daniel had a vision and saw a “certain man,” whom we believe to be the Lord Jesus in a Christophany, and then he was spoken to by the angel Gabriel and Daniel was unable to speak. The Bible said that he was “dumb.” But the Lord’s angel touched his lips which allowed him to speak: **Daniel 10:16: And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.**

Also, in the Book of Isaiah when the Prophet Isaiah saw the Lord on His throne, high and lifted up: **Isaiah 6:5-7: Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.**

In Isaiah’s case the Lord’s angel touched his mouth with a live coal from the altar.

Unless you have been called to teach or preach God’s Word you may not understand what it is like for the Lord to put His Words in your mouth. There are times that I have preached and when I get finished I can’t remember hardly anything that I said while preaching. I’ll go back and listen to the CD of the service and hear myself preaching and am amazed at some of the things that I said. But it wasn’t me that said them or came up with them, it was the LORD. It’s because the LORD puts His Words in the mouth of the preacher.

10 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.

What a job for a young preacher! Jeremiah has the responsibility to be the spokesman for the LORD. Here is what he will be prophesying: **to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. He will prophesy how the kingdom and nation should be rooted out, as a tree or plant that is plucked up by the roots; and that such an one should be pulled, and thrown down, and destroyed, as a building is.** We know that this is foretelling of the destruction of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, and also of the Temple and the City of Jerusalem.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Bible