

JEREMIAH 1

THE CALL OF JEREMIAH

The prophet Jeremiah should always have a fascination to Christian hearts because of the close similarity that exists between his life and that of our Savior's. Each of them was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Each came to his own people, and his own people did not receive him; and each also passed through many hours of rejection and desolation. In the life of Jeremiah, we may see – illustrated in great detail – experiences which are only lightly touched upon by the Evangelists in the life of Jesus. There is a special message in Jeremiah's ministry for those who are compelled to stand alone, who are called to follow in the sufferings of Christ, who fall into the ground to die, and who – through death – arise to bear fruit in the great world of people whom they passionately love.

Jeremiah was a priest, and his father's name was Hilkihah. He commenced his prophetic ministry when he was very young, in the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah of Judah (628 BC). Since the high priest who found the lost Book of the Law during Josiah's reign bore the name of Hilkihah, it is *possible* that Jeremiah may have been his son, although this cannot be definitively proven one way or the other. The extreme youth of Jeremiah when God called him to the prophet's noble but perilous office is shown by his pleas of childhood and incapacity which he modestly urged, when the voice of the Lord called him to be "a prophet unto the nations." Struck by the sense of the solemn duties which his commission imposed upon him, his gentle nature shrunk from them, as being unsuitable for his degree of strength; and he cried with deep emotion, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child!" But when he was shown that the strength in which he was to act and speak was not his own, and that he might always reckon upon supplies of grace and strength to discharge the high duties to which he was called, then he no longer sought to evade them. And although the influence of his natural temperament sometimes broke out in complaints and sighs, he did fulfill his God-given task with unremitting diligence and unswerving faithfulness for no less than 42 years, from the 13th year of King Josiah's reign to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (628-586 BC).

In the course of Jeremiah's ministry, he met with much opposition and ill-treatment from his countrymen of all classes, but especially from the highest. The necessities of the times constrained him – as the commissioned prophet of Jehovah – to exercise an important influence upon the public policy of the times. His influence was based upon the most fervent patriotism, and upon the most exact understanding of his nation's only safe and wise course in the circumstances of the times; and yet his message was offensive to his country's natural

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord calls Jeremiah to be His prophet, despite his protests – verses 1-10
- ❖ The two-fold vision of an almond-rod and a boiling caldron – verses 11-16
- ❖ God assures Jeremiah of His protecting presence with him – verses 17-19

pride. The nation's ungodly leaders saw how adverse Jeremiah's counsels were to their own plans of personal aggrandizement; so they attempted to publicly discredit his mission, and they strove to destroy his influence.

The first 10 verses of this chapter detail Jeremiah's early and Divine call to the prophet's work and office. He was not to be a prophet to the Jews alone, but also to the neighboring nations; and he is still a prophet to the whole world. It would be well if the people of our modern times would listen to his warnings; for although his words are ancient, they are still applicable to our society today. When Jeremiah remonstrated with the Lord concerning this Divine call, the Lord replied by telling him that He had ordained him to be His prophet – even before he was born! The Lord Who forms us in our mother's womb also knows the particular services and purposes that He intends for us to accomplish in our lifetimes. But unless He sanctifies us by His Holy Spirit, we shall not be fit for His holy service on earth – nor for His holy happiness in heaven, either. Although it is good for us to have humble thoughts of ourselves and our own weakness and insufficiency in our work, it should not make us draw back when God calls us to work for Him! Those who have messages to deliver from the Lord must not fear the opposition of men.

The Lord proceeded to give a two-fold vision to His new young prophet. The rod from an almond tree (which grows faster in the spring than any other tree) represented the speedy approach of judgment, and it assured Jeremiah that God would watch over him and ensure that his predictions would be swiftly performed. The boiling caldron, turned toward the north, indicated the breaking out of commotion and judgments that would come from Babylon (which lay north of Israel).

After showing His prophet this double vision, the Lord commanded him to speak all these words to His people; and He assured him that He would protect him from their malice and hatred. The whole counsel of God must be declared, whether or not it is pleasant to the ears of its recipients. Those who are sure that the Lord is with them do not need to fear any mortal man who stands against them. Happy is the person whose heart firmly trusts in the Lord! Men may fight against him, but they cannot prevail against him; for he is encircled by the care of Jehovah Himself. As the Lord spoke to Jeremiah, so He also addresses us: "They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee" (verse 19). We are immortal until the Lord's work that He has given us to do is completed.

Lord, we praise You as the One Who formed us in our mother's womb, Who has ordained us from eternity past to be Your own sons and daughters, and Who has appointed us to fill a certain purpose for Your glory. Keep us from falling into the snare of the fear of man as we fulfill Your calling for us! Amen.

