

**Message #3****Jeremiah 1:1-3**

In every moment of history there needs to be a strong messenger of God who will communicate the actual word of God to all the people of God.

**GOD'S WORD IS TO BE COMMUNICATED TO ALL PEOPLE BY JEREMIAH AT ALL TIMES IN ALL POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SETTINGS.**

The opening of the book of Jeremiah is the basis for the whole book. In the opening first three verses, there are nine facts we learn:

**FACT #1** – This book contains the “words” of God written by a man whose name is Jeremiah.  
**1:1a**

This is how God communicates to man. He communicates through words. Words form phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs. Words form contexts. God reveals Himself to man through words and in this case the words were given to Jeremiah.

The specific Hebrew noun used here for “words” is *debarim*. Etymologists (one who studies words) have concluded that the primary meaning of this is to set something in a row or arrange something in an order (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 185-188).

So Jeremiah set forth in systematic order a writing that covered everything God wanted him to cover. This includes warnings, prophecies, events and everything in this book.

The name Jeremiah in Hebrew means “whom Jehovah has raised up and lifted up and appointed” (*Ibid.*, p. 369).

There are nine other men in the Old Testament who are named Jeremiah (II Kings 23:31; 5:24; 12:4, 10, 13; Neh. 10:2; 12:1, 12, 34; Jer. 35:3; 52:1). In fact, two different Jeremiahs are named in this very book of Jeremiah (Jer. 35:3; 52:1).

There is something very practical for us to glean from this and that is a person or a church that God will raise up will be dedicated to the setting in order the word of God.

**FACT #2** – Jeremiah is the son of Hilkiah. **1:1b**

Now there was a high priest named Hilkiah during the days of Josiah (II Kings 22:4, 8), who actually found the law of God. There are some who believe this is the same Hilkiah and some who do not. However, in Calvin’s commentary, the editors made an interesting observation that those who suggest Hilkiah was not the high priest do not offer any satisfactory reasons to prove their point (*Jeremiah 1-19*, p. 33).

It would seem to me that it is very probable that this was Jeremiah's father. Hilkiah was the high priest who found the word of God and that is what caused Josiah to move the nation to ways God would bless it.

There is a note written in the Geneva Bible of the 1500's that claims this Hilkiah was the High Priest of II Kings. Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah, was a priest and more than likely he was a High Priest who had a high regard for the word of God and turned the nation back to it.

We know that when Ezra the priest read the law after Jerusalem had been rebuilt (445-425 B.C.), there was another man named Hilkiah standing next to him (Neh. 8:4). Jeremiah lived 150 years before this event but what we do learn is that Hilkiah was still a key priestly name and still is connected to the word of God.

J. Vernon McGee made an important observation. He said, "Revivals are not caused by men; they are caused by the Word of God. ... The Word of God is responsible for every revival that has taken place in the church" (*Jeremiah*, p. 354).

It is significant to learn that Jeremiah will actually attempt to turn the people back to the word of God. They were caught up with the godless world and they needed to get their attention back to God's word. He had seen the blessings that come to people when they turn back to the word of God. But he will have a very lonely task and from a human perspective he will not be too successful.

What a wonderful privilege it is for children who are raised in an environment where the word of God is revered. Jeremiah was raised in that kind of environment.

**FACT #3** – Hilkiah is one of the priests. **1:1c**

As we just mentioned, Hilkiah was one of the priests and may in fact have been the High Priest.

What this means is that Jeremiah came from and was raised in a priestly family. There is no question that Jeremiah was a priest by his ancestry; however, there is no evidence that he ever became or was a priest himself. Charles Feinberg said, "Jeremiah was a priest by birth but a prophet by calling" (*Jeremiah*, p. 382).

It is a wonderful blessing when children who are raised in a godly environment grow up to love the Lord and love the word.

**FACT #4** – Hilkiah and Jeremiah lived among the priests in Anathoth. **1:1d**

Anathoth was a Levitical priestly city in the tribal territory of Benjamin (Joshua 21:17-18). It was located about three miles NE of Jerusalem. John Calvin said that it was a small city "not far from Jerusalem" (*Jeremiah 1-19*, p. 32).

Joshua had given the city to the priests (Josh. 21:15-19) and Solomon exiled Abiathar the priest to Anathoth because he supported Adonijah to be David's successor (I Kings 1:7; 2:26-27). Abiathar had at one time helped David to escape from Saul (I Sam. 23:6-9), so Solomon let him live, but he had to live in Anathoth.

So Jeremiah was raised about 3-4 miles from Jerusalem. It was in such a close proximity to Jerusalem that when Isaiah specifically threatened Jerusalem and Zion with judgment, he said that the people of Anathoth need to pay attention to it and be terrified (Is. 10:30).

Some of Jeremiah's ministry took place in Anathoth (11:21). Much of Jeremiah's ministry took place in Jerusalem (11:6) and also he had a ministry to various cities and nations.

He had quite an upbringing. He was raised among Biblical scholars of his time and he lived near the supposedly most religious city in the world.

Again, a point worth noting, just because one is raised in a religious setting does not mean the religious setting is right with God. This whole religious world was corrupt.

**FACT #5** – Hilkiah and Jeremiah were living in the land of Benjamin. **1:1e**

Anathoth was part of the tribal division of the land given to Benjamin (Josh. 21:17-18). Benjamin's territory was small. It was only about 26 miles long and 12 miles wide. It bordered the territory of Judah. By virtue of the fact that they lived in the territory of Benjamin, Jeremiah would have been in the same tribe as the first king of Israel, who was Saul.

So Jeremiah's background is deeply rooted in that which is political and that which is priestly. **The fascinating thing is Jeremiah will attempt to turn the political world and the priestly world back to the word of God.** His assignment will be a lonely one and frankly, he will not succeed.

**FACT #6** – The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah. **1:2a**

**That phrase “the word of the LORD” is used some 349 times in the Old Testament and 157 times in Jeremiah, and it means that these are God's words.** The words are not the words of men, even though men communicate them, but they are the inspired words of God.

The inference is that God's word just came to Jeremiah. He was not soliciting this or looking for this; this was God's calling on his life.

Jeremiah was singled out by God to be a prophet. The other priests were not given this responsibility, but Jeremiah was. God chose him and made Jeremiah his prophet.

**A prophet had one main job and that was to accurately communicate the Truth of God.**

Time and time again, it will be brought out that the word is in fact the word of God.

A prophet had the responsibility to precisely and accurately communicate God's word. Under this job of being a prophet, there were two main responsibilities in ministry:

**Responsibility #1** - Communicate the truth of God no matter what the truth was or to whom the truth was aimed.

**Responsibility #2** - Communicate the true prophecies of God, revealing what God would futuristically do.

If one were a true prophet, there were three ways he communicated God's truth to people:

**Communication Way #1** - A prophet communicated God's word by his speaking.

This was by far the way a prophet was used; he would speak the word of God. He would go from place to place and literally speak the word of God. He would get a direct revelatory message from God and he would verbally communicate that message to the people. He would set forth the word of God in the language of the people in a way they could understand it.

**Communication Way #2** - A prophet communicated God's word by his writing.

A prophet would write down God's word. In fact, God specifically told Jeremiah that he was to do just that. In Jeremiah 36:2, God said to Jeremiah, "Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah and concerning all the nations from the day I first spoke to you from the days of Josiah, even to this day."

A prophet not only spoke inspired truth, he wrote inspired truth.

**Communication Way #3** - A prophet communicated God's word by his action signs.

God would at times tell a prophet that he was to do certain unusual things as an illustrative sign of what God would do. He would have a prophet do strange things to visually illustrate the veracity of His word. He did that with Isaiah and he certainly did that with Ezekiel and he does it with Jeremiah.

In **Jeremiah 13**, God had Jeremiah buy a linen waistband, then wear it and then hide it in a crevice rock on the Euphrates river and then many days later had him go back to where he buried it and dig it up (Jer. 13:1-7). He did this to show that His nation had become a rotted nation.

In **Jeremiah 18**, God had Jeremiah go to a pottery maker to see a vivid illustration of what God would do to Israel (Jer. 18:1-6).

In **Jeremiah 19**, God had Jeremiah go buy a jar and get the elders of the city and the priests and then go out to a valley and bust the jar in front of them (Jer. 19:1-11).

In **Jeremiah 27-28**, God had Jeremiah make for himself bonds and yokes and put them on his own neck to illustrate what God would do to His own people and to the nations of the world.

In **Jeremiah 32**, God had Jeremiah buy a relative's field in Anathoth to illustrate what would happen to the land in the future.

**So a prophet's job was to accurately set forth the word of God and he did it by speaking, writing, and by signs.**

**FACT #7** – Jeremiah first received God's word and prophetic calling in the days of Josiah. **1:2b**

Josiah was the son of Amon, and he was the king of Judah. Amon reigned from 642 BC-640 BC. He was an evil king. He was an arrogant person who promoted idol worship and he was so corrupt that finally his own servants assassinated him after two years of reign (II Chron. 33:20-25).

**Josiah was Amon's son, He replaced him and he became king in 640 BC. He reigned from 640 BC-609BC. So he reigned 31 years.**

He became king when he was 8-years-old and by age 12 he was rejecting idolatry and was worshipping God. He took free will offerings to rebuild the Temple and God blessed him with peace, prosperity and reform (II Kings 21:26-23:30; II Chron. 33:25-35:27).

**Jeremiah started his prophetic ministry during this reign of Josiah. The 13<sup>th</sup> year would have been around 627 BC.**

**FACT #8** – Jeremiah prophesied until the 11<sup>th</sup> year in the reign of Zedekiah. **1:3a**

**Zedekiah reigned from 597-586 BC.** He reigned for 11 years which means Jeremiah had a prophetic ministry that began in the days of Josiah, went through the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598 BC) and through the reign of Zedekiah. Jeremiah does not mention Jehoahaz or Jehoiachin because they only reigned three months each.

**So Jeremiah lived through these evil, corrupt political leaders and his ministry lasted from 627BC-586BC, which was at least 41 years. Jeremiah had a prophetic ministry that lasted for over 41 years.**

So for over 40 years, Jeremiah became known as a man who accurately heralded the word of God. He did this without any positive response. He was threatened, rejected and ridiculed and he kept at it.

F. B. Huey said, “Jeremiah would have been considered a failure by today’s standards of success, but in God’s evaluation he was an outstanding success” (*Jeremiah/Lamentations*, p. 48).

**FACT #9** – Jeremiah ministered until the exile of Jerusalem in the 5<sup>th</sup> month. **1:3b**

Jerusalem fell in August of 586 BC and we do not know specifically how long Jeremiah ministered after the fall.

Jeremiah was eventually exiled to Egypt, where he died. History says he was stoned to death in Egypt by his own fellowmen, who were angered by his presentation of truth (Hebrews 11:37).

What a life and what a ministry.