

Jeremiah 1 • The Calling for God's Word

Introduction

Understanding Jeremiah's calling is crucial to not just understanding the whole of the book of Jeremiah going forward, but our own personal calling and ministry for the kingdom of God. Jeremiah undertakes the battle for God's Word at a time when almost no one wants to hear it, when those in authority don't want to recognize it, and when the majority of so-called spiritual leaders are making money and fame counterfeiting and twisting it. He is one of the handful of true prophets amongst thousands of false ones. In our present day and time in these Last Days, Jeremiah is the closest parallel to the things we currently face.

¹The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ²to 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. ³It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the exile of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

[Read v.1-3]

Q: Is there anything "special" about "the priests who were in Anathoth?"

A: This was the Levite city allotted to the Kohathites from which high priests were originally descended. Specifically, this was the hometown of Abiathar who was deposed by Solomon at God's command that no more high priests should come from his line. It's a powerful illustration not only of God's grace, but the biblical principle of God using what the world considers to be the weak and despised to confound the perceived wise and strong.

Q: What does "Jeremiah" mean?

A: Scholars are divided because of the Hebrew spelling, that it either means "the Lord shall exalt" or "the Lord shall cast down". This is extremely interesting as both represent each side of the coin, so to speak, of God's messages through Jeremiah, that it is God alone who exalts **His** ways and casts down those of **man's**. Either way, it fits.

Q: How might this relate to the historical setting of Jeremiah's ministry?

A: It began during the reign of king Josiah, the author of Judah's last major revival in which Josiah "exalted" God by "pulling down" all the idols, places, and institutions devoted to other gods. Jeremiah's ministry continued through the reigns of the last kings of Judah into its captivity wherein these latter kings oversaw the "pulling down" of Josiah's reforms and the "exalting" of false gods in their place.

Observation: Anathoth was a Levite city within the boundaries of the tribe of Benjamin located approximately 3 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Jeremiah is unique in that he's not just a prophet, but also a priest. God speaks through Jeremiah to the fallen priesthood as much as to the people in general and therefore provides insight into God's expectations for the leaders of His people. Among the other things that makes Jeremiah a foreshadow or type of the Messiah to come, Jewish tradition holds that Jeremiah, too was descended from Rahab the Gentile harlot just as Jesus was.

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
And before you were born I consecrated you;
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

⁶Then I said, “Alas, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, Because I am a youth.”

⁷But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,
And all that I command you, you shall speak.

⁸Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD.

⁹Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me,

“Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

¹⁰See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant.”

[Read v.4-10]

Q: Is Jeremiah's predestined calling by God something unique that really can't be applied to us personally?

also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,
Ephesians 1:11

A: Like Jeremiah, God knew and called us personally before we were even born.

Q: What are God's four stated actions in v.5?

- “I formed you” – We are equipped as we are for His purpose.
- “I knew you” – We are individually called for His purpose.
- “I consecrated you” – We are separated from the world's ways for His purpose.
- “I have appointed you” – We are specifically called for His purpose.

Q: What is Jeremiah's chief objection as expressed in v.6?

A: That he's too young and inexperienced.

Q: What are God's 3 responses in v.7-8?

- “I send you” – Jeremiah's not to go his own way, but God's.
- “all that I command you...speak” – Jeremiah's not to speak his own words, but God's.
- “Do not be afraid...I am with you” – Jeremiah is not to go in his own strength, but God's.

Q: What is the meaning of God's touching Jeremiah's mouth?

A: The primary service to which he is called is the proclamation of God's Word.

Q: What will God's Word accomplish through His messenger? How will it take affect on earth or in real life?

A: According to v.10 it is compared to both a plant as either being plucked up or firmly planted for growth and fruitfulness, and as a building that is either torn down or firmly established. There is no “gray” area where God's Word is concerned: it either establishes righteousness or eradicates unrighteousness.

Point: *God's Word has a dual purpose, to grow and build those who adhere to it, or bring down and uproot those who don't.*

Q: There seem to be some parallels between the responses of both Moses and Jeremiah when called by God. What might be different about Jeremiah's overall ministry and how it might relate more personally to our own calling?

A: Jeremiah is being called to preach God's Word, not perform signs and wonders. Just like him, this is exactly what every believer is called to do.

¹¹The word of the LORD came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?”

And I said, “I see a rod of an almond tree.”

¹²Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.”

¹³The word of the LORD came to me a second time saying, “What do you see?”

And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.”

¹⁴Then the LORD said to me, “Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north,” declares the LORD; “and they will come and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about and against all the cities of Judah. ¹⁶I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.

¹⁷“Now, gird up your loins and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them. ¹⁸Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests and to the people of the land. ¹⁹They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD.

[Read v.11-16]

Q: What is the meaning of the “rod of an almond” tree in v.11-13?

A: The almond tree is one of the earliest blooming and fruit-bearing trees in the Middle East harvest seasons. The rod was probably in a state long before the almonds themselves were to appear, so it's God's way of stating that His Word will come to full fruition soon in exactly the way He describes. In the original Hebrew, there is a word play in that “shoqed ani” (“I will hasten”) sounds very similar to “shaqed”, the Hebrew name for an almond tree.

Q: What is the first judgment illustrated by the boiling pot?

A: The conquest of Judah by Babylon. It is inferred that because Judah has forsaken God's Word, Judah will undergo appropriate judgment.

Q: What is the second judgment revealed by God?

A: God will judge those nations gathered against Israel. It is inferred that they, too, are to be judged for their own dismissal of God's Word as expounded on in v.16.

Q: What is significant about these kings setting their thrones “at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem”?

A: In ancient times, a city's gates were the most common place that trials and justice was meted out. There's multiple ironies in these nations coming to bring judgment upon Israel and themselves in turn being judged at that very same spot of judgment.

Q: How would you summarize the overall message that God is going to communicate to everyone – both Jew and Gentile – through Jeremiah?

A: Everyone will be judged according to the degree of their faithfulness to God's Word. Each person will either bear the fruit of God's righteousness as a result of obedience to His Word, or judgment for disobedience. Regardless of how the earthly situation looks temporarily, whether one thinks they've failed or succeeded in their personal goals, it will be ultimately tested by God's standards, not their own.

[Read v.17-19]

Q: How would the command to “gird up your loins and arise” apply to us today?

A: In the language of the time, it's a resolute command to be firmly and actively ready to undertake God's work.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:13

Q: What is the common characteristic of all the illustrations used such as “a fortified city”, “a pillar of iron”, and “walls of bronze”?

A: They are all hardened, defensive structures capable of withstanding a great force or attack.

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Ephesians 6:13

Point: God calls us to resist from an earthly perspective, trusting Him to carry on the battle from the spiritual perspective. **HE** will see that His word accomplishes the purpose for which it is sent, not us. Therefore we must not shrink from preaching it.

Q: Based on those identified in v.18 who will fight against Jeremiah, how might we come to understand the role and calling of a prophet?

A: All those listed are God's people, whether leaders or followers. A prophet is something of an evangelist to God's people, calling them back to obedience to God's Word, to sincere repentance. Whereas an evangelist preaches to the unsaved, a prophet preaches to the backslidden.

Point: A prophet **NEEDS** to be spiritually hardened as depicted in v.18 in order to not succumb to the same backsliding ways of those they're trying to reach.

Overall Application

Compare and contrast your own calling and the way in which you are (or aren't) carrying it out in the same manner as Jeremiah. Do you realize how much it all comes down to being equipped with, and adhering to, God's Word?