

A CHARACTER STUDY OF
THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

Lesson 1

THE CALLING OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 1:1-10

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Adult Sunday school Class

THE CALLING OF JEREMIAH

“Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.”

Jeremiah 1:17

Good King Josiah was the ruler in Judah when Jeremiah was a young man. In Josiah’s 13th year the Lord came to Jeremiah with a message of condemnation and judgment for the people of Israel. The Lord needed a man to preach the words of God to the rebellious people of Jerusalem. God had chosen this man to be His prophet before Jeremiah was even born. Jeremiah’s calling was to stand for righteousness and rebuke sinful Judah. The great prophet Isaiah had passed off the scene years before and God needed a prophet to call the people of Israel back from their apostasy and back to obedience to the Father. “Jeremiah began his ministry in Josiah’s thirteenth year (626 B.C.), five years after the revival. His ministry continued into the early years of the Exile. He died in Egypt, probably a few years after the destruction of

Jerusalem, which occurred in 587 B.C.”. (Wycliffe. P. 655) The prophet Jeremiah is often called the “weeping Prophet” as he grieved over the plight of his sinning brethren. He was one of the major prophets of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament of the Christian Bible) According to Jewish tradition Jeremiah authored the Book of Jeremiah, the Book of Kings, the Book of Lamentations, with the assistance and under the editorship of Baruch ben Neriah, his scribe and disciple.” (Jer. 36:18) It is accepted that Jeremiah was one of the greatest prophets in Israel. However, his message was not always appreciated by the people of Israel. He “exhorted to obedience to the divine command; but in doing this then and afterwards he became the object of much hostility esp. in his native city, Anathoth.” (ISBY. P.1588) The call of this great man to his prophetic ministry is recorded in the first ten verses of the Book that bears his name.

The historic context of his ministry is expressed in verses 2 & 3. He tells his readers that the word of the LORD came to him during the thirteenth year of King Josiah’s reign. He continued preaching in the days of

King Jehoiakim and also King Zedekiah. He was God's voice in Jerusalem even till the people were carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar. He began his ministry as a young man of about 20 years of age and continued for about 50 years. It is said that he died in Egypt. Jeremiah's account of his calling includes the words of the Lord, *"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."* (Jer. 1:5) He was known to God even before his conception. The birth of every person is special to God and should be considered sacred. To end a life before its birth is a desecration of the plan of God for that person. Each newborn is unique in the eyes of God. Jeremiah was set apart (sanctified) by God to accomplish a special job for God. He was to be a prophet (a proclaimer of the will of God) to all the nations. Like Moses (Ex. 4:10) and Isaiah (Isa. 6:15) before him, he cried in fear, "I cannot speak for I am a child." The call of God must have been intimidating. That is why God said to him, *"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.” (Jeremiah 1:7) In Isaiah 6 God sent an angel to the young prophet, Isaiah, with a coal from off the altar of God. This was to purify the prophet’s mouth. God touched Jeremiah’s mouth to give him a special commissioning. He was being sent to a stubborn people. He needed to understand that God would go with him to preach. Jeremiah’s misunderstanding, however, was to think that God would send him out to face the people on his own. God would go with him. Go before him, and prepare him with the correct words to say. He would not be on his own. Every missionary that God has ever sent out went with the complete confidence that they were only the messenger. God was going to move through them to bring His message to that specific people. Jeremiah was frightened at the thought of preaching to such rebellious people. God’s promise to Jeremiah was the same as He makes to every soul-winner today. *“And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.”* (Vs. 9b) Christian, as we go out to do the work of God, we go in His power and

ability. The most important ability that the believer brings to the ministry is availability. Jeremiah's ministry outline is given in verse 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."* "God's use of four synonyms for destruction and only two for building indicates that Jeremiah's message was to be predominately judgment." (Wycliffe. P. 659) God concludes His call to Jeremiah with the command, *"Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them."* (Vs. 17) He tells him to be strong because his message will not be well received. *"And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee."* (Vs. 19)

Wycliffe - The Wycliffe Bible Commentary. By Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison. Moody Press, Chicago, Il. 1962.

ISBY - The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. By James Orr. Vol III. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1956

Notes

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