

**A PERSONAL  
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY  
JEREMIAH**

**BY  
SHARON CRAVENS**

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

**Jer. 1:2 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 was serving in Jerusalem/Judah at the same time Ezekiel and Daniel were serving in Babylon. He is identified as coming from Anathoth, which was about three miles from Jerusalem. We are also told that his ministry began during the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Josiah (about 627 BC) and continued on past the time that Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the final deportation of Jews in 586 BC. Jeremiah was given the choice of going to Babylon under the favor of the king or staying with his people in Israel. He chose to stay in Israel but ended up being forced by his own people to go with them to Egypt after they murdered Gedaliah, the governor appointed over those left behind by the Babylonian forces. There is no real proof as to how he died.

It's also important to note that Jeremiah was from a family of priests, so I would assume he was a Levite.

**Jer. 1:3 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.**

This verse affirms that Jeremiah also served during the reign of Josiah's son, Jehoiakim until the 11<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah, Josiah's brother, that was appointed to the throne by Nebuchadnezzar after the second of three waves of deportation. Daniel was taken to Babylon in the first group, and Ezekiel was taken in the second group.

**Jer. 1:4 ¶ Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

**Jer. 1:5 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.**

This is an important verse in defining personhood from God's point of view. Even BEFORE He formed Jeremiah in his mother's womb, God had determined that Jeremiah was to be one of His prophets. Every human being is known by God before he/she is even conceived. It's also a beautiful statement of the hand of God at work in the conception of every child.

This is a verse that goes hand-in-hand with the truth declared by Paul in his letter to the Romans.

*Romans 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

I do not believe Jeremiah was deprived of choice in light of God's calling. I believe that God's calling was based on His omniscience in light of the person Jeremiah would be.

It's also interesting to note that God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to "the nations," not just Israel. Many of God's prophets had messages for "the nations." Though God chose Israel as His special witness to the nations, His plan has always included provision for all people to come to saving faith by accepting Him as LORD. Jeremiah is still declaring God's truth to all nations through the scripture.

**Jer. 1:6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child.**

**Jer. 1:7 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.**

As Moses before him, Jeremiah protested that he was not qualified to serve as God's prophet; he wasn't a good communicator. Just as He did with Moses, God assured Jeremiah that He would be able to speak as God commanded. In other words, whatever God asks you to do, He will empower you to do.

He further protested that he was too young to be effective. It is surmised that he was in his late teens or early twenties. He probably protested because he wasn't yet old enough to serve in the temple.

*Numbers 8:24–25 "This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more:"*

**Jer. 1:8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.**

Scripture is full of instances of the LORD telling His people not to be afraid as long as they are acting in obedience to Him. I immediately thought of His words to Joshua.

*Joshua 1:9 "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."*

The Lord Jesus made that same promise to those who choose to follow Him as Savior.

*Matthew 28:19–20 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I *am* with you *always*, even unto the end of the world."*

**Jer. 1:9 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.**

**Jer. 1:10 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.**

I don't know how God was speaking to Jeremiah, but he declares that God touched his mouth with His hand. With that touch, Jeremiah was to understand that God had put His words into Jeremiah's mouth; he didn't have to worry about knowing what to say. (Oh, how I yearn for that touch, Father!)

God dealt with His servants in so many different ways. Moses and Elijah were empowered to do miracles to reinforce their message. Isaiah tells us of having his mouth touched with a hot coal to purify him for ministry. Ezekiel and John tell us of eating scrolls to absorb the message they were to share.

Verse 10 is a bit confusing. How was Jeremiah to accomplish such feats among the nations? The Hebrew for the word *set* makes reference to being an overseer and giving a charge. In other words, he is to declare God's messages to the nations as well as to Israel. Many of these messages would include words of judgment and destruction; some would consist of encouraging words of building and growth.

**Jer. 1:11 ¶ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.**

**Jer. 1:12 Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.**

Evidently the LORD gives Jeremiah a vision of a branch of an almond tree that is blossoming (from the Hebrew). God asks him what he sees, and he states the obvious. God basically answers him by saying that just as surely as this branch is blossoming the words that I give you to speak will come to pass shortly (at least from heaven's perspective).

**Jer. 1:13 And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north.**

**Jer. 1:14 Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.**

**Jer. 1:15 For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.**

God gives him a second vision. When he asks Jeremiah what he sees, he answers that he sees a boiling pot facing away from the north; some translations indicate it is tilting from the north. The LORD explains that this represents great harm or trouble that will come from the north and will affect everyone in Israel.

Verse 15 is interesting. The assumption is that the reference is to the attack of Babylon. The wording—"all the families of the kingdoms of the north"—seems to me to make a great jump ahead to end times and the forces of Antichrist or possibly even the attack of the forces of Gog detailed in Ezekiel 38-39.

The NIV Commentary gave a good explanation of why Israel's enemies always seem to come from the north: "Though Babylon is located east of Judah, her armies—and all invading armies from Asia—would invade Palestine from the north because of the impassable Arabian desert."

**Jer. 1:16** And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

In this verse God is declaring that the evil coming to Israel is His judgment upon them for living wickedly in rejection of Him as Lord and for worshiping idols and false gods in the process. God had declared to them from the very beginning that He is a jealous God and that they would be judged if they did not keep covenant with Him.

*Deuteronomy 5:6–9* "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for **I the LORD thy God am a jealous God....**"

*Deuteronomy 31:16–18* "And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods."

**Jer. 1:17** 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.

**Jer. 1:18** For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

**Jer. 1:19** And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

The LORD now commands Jeremiah to get up and go out to deliver God's word to the people. To "gird up your loins" is a phrase that means to prepare for a fight. He is not to let them intimidate him; He is to trust God. If he shows fear, God will humble him in the sight of the people. God even paints a word picture to help Jeremiah understand his position of strength. As long as he is obeying God, he is just as protected as a city with the best and strongest fortifications.

Though the people will fight against him because they don't like the message he declares, God will deliver him from them. God emphasizes again, as He did in verse 8, that He will be with Jeremiah.

Future chapters will reveal that this promise from God will serve to test the prophet's faith. It doesn't mean that he won't experience trouble at the hands of his enemies. It does, however, mean that God will be with him and enable him to be an overcomer in spite of those troubles. This would prove true of many of our heroes of the faith. This principle is still true for every believer today. In fact, the LORD declared that we would experience trouble of varying kinds in this world; however, He also promised that He would be with us and empower us to be overcomers also if we will continue to follow Him in faith.

*John 16:33 "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*

*1 John 5:4 "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."*

*Matthew 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth....and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."*

It is interesting to note that Jeremiah will be opposed by the kings, princes, priests and people. I think the order is significant. The people are prone to follow their leaders. The kings, princes and priests of Israel were all established authorities under God to lead the people according to God's commands and instructions. Instead of responding with repentant heart to God's word as declared by Jeremiah, he is to expect them to fight. The very ones who should be examples of righteousness before the people were responsible for leading them into wickedness and rebellion against God.

Is there application to be made to many who are recognized as the religious leaders of today? I'm afraid so.