Jeremiah Chapter 1

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Chapter 1

Theme: Identity and timing of Jeremiah, ordination to be a prophet, and charge against Judah and nations.

Outline:

1-3 Identity and Timing of Prophet Jeremiah

4-10 Jeremiah Ordained to Be God's Prophet

11-12 Vision of Almond Tree for Imminency

13-16 Vision of Seething Pot for Babylonians

17-19 God Would Defend Him Against Judah

Preparatory Reading: II Kings 23; Exodus 4; Galatians 1.

Related Links:

A. *Introduction to the Book of Jeremiah … here.*
B. Overview of O.T. Prophets *(1).*
C. Overview of O.T. Prophets *(2).*
D. Timeline of the O.T. Prophets.
E. *Interpreting Prophecy (slides) … here.*
F. Overview of Minor Prophets *(1).*
G. Overview of Minor Prophets *(2).*
H. Prophets of God *(Men and Work).*

Introduction:

A. When we open our Bible, we are in the divine library from heaven to take one of its 66 volumes down.
B. The greatest blessing, opportunity, privilege, and pleasure is to preach or to hear God's word preached.
C. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, so let us increase our faith (Romans 10:17).
D. We have asked as our general habit, and we do again humbly now, for God to teach us (Ps 119:18).
E. Our first expositional goal is to interpret the text as originally intended and historically understood.
F. We then want to draw what we will call lessons from the text for us to apply to our own lives today.

Identity and Timing of Jeremiah – Verses 1-3

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

A. Jeremiah = *Appointed by Jehovah*. Names with *jah* or *iah* at the end will mean Jehovah; Jeremiah's father's name also ended with iah; his name means, *My portion is Jehovah*.

B. Jeremiah and father were priests, ordinary teachers, but God called Jeremiah to the office/work of prophet, which did not belong to the other priests in Anathoth.

C. Israel's division had two tribes including Benjamin usually called Judah; they were two southern tribes as distinguished from the ten northern tribes called Israel or Ephraim.

D. Anathoth, a well-known city where priests lived (Abiathar's line), will come up again; it was about three miles from Jerusalem in the tribal boundaries of Benjamin.

E. A study for another time is whether the city of Jerusalem was in Benjamin or in Judah.

F. Lesson: The preachers we want to listen to are appointed by God, known by ordination; for Jeremiah, we can read about his divine appointment in coming verses (Jer 1:4-10).

G. Lesson: We want words, the words of God by preaching (Jer 1:2,4.9), for that is how He gives truth and wisdom (I Cor 1:21), if we receive them as His words (I Thes 2:13).

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.

A. Jeremiah's ministry began under the greatest revival king of Judah (II Kings 23:25).

B. His revival was great, but grandfather Manasseh's sins were too much (II Kings 23:26).

C. Israel (the ten tribes) had been rejected and scattered by Shalmaneser (II Kings 23:27).

D. The greatest revival (and Passover) occurred in Josiah's 18th year; Jeremiah's 5th

E. Lesson: God is incredibly merciful, but nations or men can sin beyond them (Pr 29:1).

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.

A. Jeremiah prophesied approximately 40 years in round numbers by the reigns listed here.

B. Two kings are not mentioned for reigning only three months – Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin.

C. Jehoahaz replaced Josiah: Necho took him to Egypt and made brother Jehoiakim king.

D. Jehoiachin reigned three months: Nebuchadnezzar took him to Babylon for Zedekiah.

E. In rough terms, Jeremiah's 40 years are Josiah (18), Jehoiakim (11), and Zedekiah (11).

F. Except for Josiah, the four kings Jeremiah prophesied under were evil before the LORD.

G. Lesson: Good men can have bad sons like Hezekiah (Manasseh) and Josiah (these two).

God Called Jeremiah to Be a Prophet – Verses 4-10

4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

A. Here is Jeremiah's ordination – appointment and charge – to be a prophet of Jehovah.
   1. Why do I call this an ordination? Because the next verse says God ordained him; this was the formal and official declaration of it to Jeremiah and to others then and now.
   2. Singled out in God's eternal counsel, He now commissioned Jeremiah to his work.
   3. Prophet = a messenger from God with information needed by his specified audience.
   4. Not as impressive? Paul laying hands on Timothy is great (Acts 16:1-3; II Tim 1:6).
   5. Since then, men have ordained men to preach better news than Jeremiah (II Cor 2:2).

B. This is what we love to read … *thus saith the LORD* … God divinely ordained Jeremiah.

C. What follows is the exchange between GOD and Jeremiah about his coming ministry.

D. This is wonderful insider information of international importance as you shall soon read.

E. Lesson: There are few prayer requests more important than God to raise up preachers.

F. Lesson: We believe in ministerial succession, not church succession, like Landmarkers.

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.

A. We know by the Bible God formed us in our mothers (Ps 139:13-18; 71:6; Job 31:15).

B. We also know from the Bible greater things He did (Eph 1:4; Rom 9:10-12; Rev 13:8).

C. The words here are very similar to ministerial purpose written by Paul (Gal 1:15-16).

D. God does nothing in time He did not certainly plan from eternity (Acts 15:18; Is 46:10).

E. You should consider all the things Jehovah did for you before the world began … Before the World Began.

F. **Know** = to choose an affectionate relationship and friendly favor, far past bare foresight.

G. **Sanctify =** to consecrate and set apart from ordinary use for a special holy purpose.

H. **Ordained =** appointed and commissioned to fulfill a formal office and work of God.

I. **Prophet** = a messenger from God with information needed by his specified audience.

J. Lesson: Reasons to esteem a preacher and his work include this here (I Thess 5:12-13).

K. Lesson: The eternal decrees of God in this and all matters should move to exhaust them.

L. Lesson: You are not called to be a prophet? What are you to do? Do it with your might!

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

A. This emphatic call to God (exclamation!) is four times each by Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

B. Note the all capital letters of GOD, by which the name Jehovah is indicated in a different way (Jer 1:6;

2:19,22; 4:10; 7:20; 14:13; 32:17,25; 44:26; 46:10 (2); 49:5; 50:25,31).

C. Intense appeals to God are good and should be used as part of fervent prayer (Jas 5:16).

D. When God calls a man to do anything, he can and should do it without any excuses.
   1. Moses resisted God's call to the ministry, but it angered the LORD (Exodus 4:1-17).
   2. Jonah resisted God to save Nineveh, but it angered the LORD (Jonah 1:1-3; 4:1-11).
   3. When God calls a man, he better go (I Pet 5:2), just as a giver better do it cheerfully.
   4. God will not call you or charge you to do anything you cannot do with His strength.

E. Solomon used similar language, but he did not resist God but rather petitioned for profit.
   1. He honored God by his request, because he wanted to be a wise ruler (I Kgs 3:5-10).
   2. It is better to align with men that did not presume on the office, for it has hardness.
   3. Yet it is a true rule, desiring the office of bishop is to desire a good work (I Tim 3:1).

F. Lesson: Only very carefully say you cannot do what God tells you to do, like Solomon.

G. Lesson: Gideon made the Hall of Faith (so did Samson), but let us not need his fleeces.

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.

A. Note the difference here between how Jeremiah said the same words that Solomon said.

B. Jeremiah claimed he was only a child in resistance, but Solomon prayed for wisdom.

C. God would further identify his audience – all of the nation of Judah and foreign nations.

D. God would further provide the content – exactly what he was to preach against Judah.

E. Lesson: Know the difference between the humility of a child and any foolish resistance.

F. Lesson: Ministers must know two things – their God-given audience and their content.

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

A. This warning and promise is repeated in the chapter's last verses – obviously important.
   1. Preachers can easily have a tendency or temptation to worry what hearers may think.
   2. The nature of preaching – public teaching – means much time seeing hearers' faces.
   3. Jokes are made of preachers seeing sleepers, but what of daydreamers and scorners?

B. But when God gives a man a message, he cannot be afraid, but he should rather be bold.
   1. First is the importance of the content. Words from God in heaven must be delivered.
   2. Second is the call of the office, for the office is not of men but of God, so fulfill it.
   3. Third is the depravity and rebellion of natural men, which should provoke intensity.
   4. Elihu did not fear. He waited due to age but then unloaded angrily (Job 32:1-22).

C. God will take care of His preachers, as it is said, *Touch not mine anointed* (Ps 105:15).

1. This was fulfilled in Abimelech twice for Abraham and Isaac (Gen 20:3-7; 26:11).
2. Jeroboam was judged quickly for stretching his hand against a prophet (I Kgs 13:4).
3. Some 40 Jews have not eaten or drunk yet that vowed to kill Paul (Acts 23:12-14).

D. Lesson: Every preacher must be warned ahead of time to be fully committed to no fear.

E. Lesson: Be wise and careful in what you think, say, or do against an ordained preacher.

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.

A. The most important factor in any man preaching is God's own appointment of that man.
   1. If the LORD gives abilities and qualifications, fruit will follow faithful use of them.
   2. Our GOD Jehovah put forth His hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth to ordain him.
   3. Preaching is public teaching, and it requires two things – ability and content to teach.
   4. Pastors must be "apt to teach," whether Moses or Timothy, for that is their vocation.
   5. God gave Saul, Israel's king, a new heart for a better man (I Sam 10:6-7,9; 11:6-7).

B. The only message a man should ever preach is God's words as from God (I Thess 2:13).
   1. Ordination gives a man God's words to teach others (II Tim 3:16-17; II Tim 4:2).
   2. Preaching is the highest earthly calling – a bishop's work is a good work (I Tim 3:1).
   3. As Elihu, preachers defend and justify God, not man. They must fear God, not man.

C. Lesson: We can know God's call by ability and qualifications (I Tim 3:1-6; Ex 31:1-5).

D. Lesson: Ordination as a bishop/pastor/teacher is to commit the word to him (II Tim 2:2).

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.

A. The day here was Jeremiah's ordination, when God formally assigned him to his work.
   1. With a divine appointment, a man though inferior or insecure himself, must preach.
   2. With ordination, a preacher must only look forward and not back (Luke 9:62; 17:32).
   3. The word "see" should not be skipped; it was used for Bezaleel's calling (Ex 3:1-5).
   4. Pastors must "see" the abilities and qualifications of another man to ordain to office.

B. Jeremiah's ministry was international, not just to Jews of Judah or Israel, as stated here.
   1. God told Jeremiah to use wine with kings for Nebuchadnezzar's war (Jer 25:15-29).
   2. Then God told Jeremiah to use bonds and yokes for those kings (Jeremiah 27:1-11).
   3. Chapters 46-51, six chapters, are used this way against the Gentiles (Jer 46:1), Egypt (Jer 46:2-28), Philistines (Jer 47:1-7), Moab (Jer 48:1-47), Ammon (Jer 49:1-6), Edom (Jer 49:7-22), Syria (Jer 49:23-27), Kedar and Hazor (Jer 49:28-33), Elam (Jer 49:34-39), Chaldeans and Babylon (Jer 50:1-46; 51:1-64).

C. Jeremiah's ministry would be largely negative in the way of preaching wide destruction.
   1. Because of Manasseh's sin, there was no way the Jews could save their Jerusalem.
   2. Nebuchadnezzar, His servant, would come with a confederate host to utterly ruin all.

D. However, after Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of them, God would recover His Judah.

E. Lesson: A preacher's ministry is largely negative to get the sinful junk out of your life.

F. Lesson: A preacher wars against hearers; grasp the conflict and forfeit (II Cor 10:4-6).

G. Lesson: A minister must teach duties and intensely expect them (II Tim 4:1-2; Tit 2:15).

H. Lesson: The word a preacher uses is neutral, negative (2), or positive (II Tim 3:16-17).

Vision of Almond Tree for Imminency – Verses 11-12

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.

A. Here is the first symbolic lesson with others to follow in Jeremiah's call and ministry.

B. It was a vision of some kind, which is not very important, for a metaphorical picture.
   1. Jeremiah may have been sharp enough to detect a bare branch or it had its leaves.
   2. The almond tree is the first to blossom in Israel, often having blossoms in winter, months before the other trees blossom, portending an event early, quick, and soon.
   3. Just a little online research reveals that almond trees bloom first in Israel in January.
   4. Almond tree blossoms to Israel are what cherry blossoms are to Japan, but 80% of the world's almonds are grown in California, where almond orchards abound.
   5. We know speed is the trait of almond trees God chose by His following application.
   6. Jeremiah would not be warning about an event far off but one rapidly approaching.
   7. Rather than think of punishment by a rod, we let the LORD direct by the verb *hasten*.

C. Solomon used almond trees for a different metaphor – white hair with age (Eccl 12:5).

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

A. God commended Jeremiah's discernment of an almond tree from the rod or branch seen.

B. The almond tree is the first to blossom in Israel, often having blossoms in winter, months before the other trees blossom, portending an event early, quick, and soon.

C. Jeremiah did not preach a warning to be fulfilled much later; hearers saw it fulfilled.

D. Lesson: Our God is slow to anger, but once angry His judgment may come very quickly.

E. Lesson: If men doubt God's warning, they tempt Him to prove them wrong by judging.

Vision of Seething Pot for Babylonians – Verses 13-16

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.

A. Here is the first symbolic lesson with many to follow in Jeremiah's call and his ministry.

B. It was a vision of some kind, which is not very important, for a metaphorical picture.

C. The pot was boiling, which causes the liquid in it to reach an angry and violent eruption.

D. The pot faced toward the north in some way, indicating that the energy came from there.

E. Because of what is explained in the next verse, think danger erupting out of the north.

F. Looking at a map, you might see Babylon the city almost directly east from Jerusalem.
   1. But the route they had to take around the Arabian Desert brings them from the north.
   2. Babylon was only a city by itself, but it led a confederation of nations from the north.
   3. A confederation of many kingdoms and nations is stated often (Jer 1:15; 25:9; 34:1).

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

A. Here the LORD only told Jeremiah the direction, but He would later detail much more.

B. The land to a Jew, to Jeremiah, was the only land that mattered, what was left of Israel.

C. Looking at a map, you might see Babylon the city almost directly east from Jerusalem.
   1. But the route they had to take around the Arabian Desert brings them from the north.
   2. Babylon was only a city by itself, but it led a confederation of nations from the north.
   3. A confederation of many kingdoms and nations is stated often, as in the next verse.

D. The evil here is not sin directly but pain, punishment, trouble by the Chaldean empire.

E. How does evil break forth here? By erupting like a boiling pot with extreme energy.

F. Lesson: Evil cannot happen without Jehovah's overriding rule (Amos 3:6; Isaiah 45:7).

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.

A. Our God rules all international political events. Believe it. Trust it (Jer 10:7; Eccl 5:8).

B. He can and does raise up individual kings and put them down (Daniel 2:21; 4:17,32).

C. He can and does call nations to battle (Josh 11:20; I Chron 5:26; II Chron 21:16; 36:22).

D. When God calls, the nations come. All creatures obey Him whenever He calls to them.

E. Kingdoms and nations under the Chaldeans / Babylonians would come against Judah.
F. The various minor kings or princes of the kingdoms would come to besiege Jerusalem.
G. While sitting in the gate is usually a city's judge, these foreign princes would be judges.
H. Lesson: Never fear or worry about national or international events, for the LORD reigns.

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.

A. The plural pronoun "them" has two antecedents in the previous verse – nations or Judah.
B. It is Jerusalem and Judah, for they are the only ones in context to have forsaken Jehovah.
C. God uttering His judgments here by the previous verse is to issue sentence against them.
    1. The Spirit specifically uses the words, "I will give sentence against them" (Jer 4:12).
    2. God would roar from on high and utter His voice against His Jerusalem (Jer 25:30).
D. Instead of defending Judah like for Hezekiah, He would condemn them to destruction.
E. Why had God forsaken them in this manner? Because they had forsaken Him for idols.
F. When we turn from God, we ask Him to fully examine our lives and judge all our sins.
G. There was no mercy remaining toward the Jews due to the extent of their false religion.
H. He will mock them for switching to idols and handmade gods (Jeremiah 2:9-13,26-28).
I. Lesson: It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:30-31).
J. Lesson: Our God is a jealous God so that friendship with the world is adultery (Jas 4:4).
K. Lesson: He will not forsake those that do not forsake Him; this simple rule is crucial.

God Would Defend Him Against Judah – Verses 17-19

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.

A. An imminent threat (almond tree) would come from the north (seething pot that way).
B. Jeremiah was God's messenger of the Babylonian danger, so he needed to get to work.
    1. To "gird up thy loins" was the action to gather loose garments for intense action, which the Spirit used as a metaphor with rising up to stir Jeremiah to intense action.
    2. We use a comparable idiom about getting to work by "rolling up your sleeves."
    3. God ordained him a prophet and given him words; he needed to tell them the danger.
C. Jeremiah was to give them no other message than exactly the words God had given him.
    1. Eli told Samuel not to hold back terrible words of judgment for Eli (I Sam 3:15-18).
    2. A terrible message of incurable ruin of Jerusalem and their lives would be unpopular.

D. Jeremiah was to ignore their feelings and reactions without fear or loss of commitment.
    1. Preaching, or public teaching, involves facing an audience; facial reactions are seen.
    2. Competent pastors see and discern reactions from joy to scorn on the array of faces.
    3. God had already warned about their faces and promised divine protection (Jer 1:8).

E. **Dismay** = Utter loss of moral courage or resolution in prospect of danger or difficulty; faintness of heart from terror or from feeling of inability to cope with peril or calamity.

F. God warned Jeremiah that He would confound him before his hearers if he was fearful.

G. **Confound** = trouble from inability to hold intelligent reasoning to his disgraceful ruin.

H. God threatened Ezekiel similarly with guilt of the blood of his hearers (Ezek 3:18; 33:8).

I. Paul said preaching was not his choice, but woe would come for negligence (I Cor 9:16).

J. Lesson: Preachers must teach all of God's word and only God's words (Matthew 28:20).

K. Lesson: They were given an inspired manual for perfect teaching (II Tim 4:2; 3:15-17).

L. Lesson: They must be strong and consider it like intense military action (II Tim 2:1-4).

M. Lesson: They must not fear the faces or actions of any man or group of men (Tit 2:15).

N. Lesson: They must intensely urge and press duties in or out of season (II Timothy 4:2).

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.

A. You do your job as I described in the previous verse, for I have your back and all sides!

B. God dramatically and graphically described Jeremiah's role and the audience he faced!

C. He was going to war against hearers that would fight him, but God had him protected.

D. **A defenced city** = a city with defenses; fenced, protected, fortified; walled (Pr 25:28).

E. **An iron pillar** = one of the hardest substances and impervious to altering (Lev 26:19).

F. **Brasen walls =** fortified walls of brass to resist all ordinary measures to breach them.

G. God also called him a tower and a fortress and a fenced brazen wall (Jer 6:27; 15:20).

H. God told Ezekiel to have strong and hard face and forehead against theirs (Ezek 3:8-9).

I. Jesus said He set His face like a flint and would not be confounded or ashamed (Is 50:7).

J. God made Jeremiah the above three things against a five-fold audience of adversaries: the whole land of Judah and all its people, the Judaic kings, the princes, and the priests.

K. How could Jeremiah be right against such impressive opponents? Easily! By His words!

L. God mocked the dreams and chaff of Judah's pastors by God's words (Jer 23:28-30).

M. Lesson: Pastors must flush timidity for a spirit of power, love, sound mind (II Tim 1:7).

N. Lesson: Ministerial work is warfare; pastors tear down hearers' ideas (II Cor 10:4-6).

O. Lesson: Like Elihu and David, they should not be fearful (Job 32:1-22; Ps 119:98-100).

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.

A. The five opponents – the whole land, kings, princes, priests, people – would fight him.
B. Why would hearers ever resist or fight a preacher of God? Why Eve? Why Cain? Sin!
C. What an ordination! What a beginning for this prophet! He is told his hearers will fight!
D. But it is totally comforting, invigorating, and empowering to know Jeremiah would win.
E. The LORD Jehovah would be with Jeremiah, so there was no one to fear (Heb 13:5-6).
F. The book will reveal in different situations how God did deliver Jeremiah from enemies.
G. God stood with Paul against Nero (II Tim 4:16-17), so God would stand with Jeremiah.
H. Preachers faithful to their Captain will receive a crown of glory as reward (I Peter 5:4).
I. Lesson: Pastors must remember they win in the end and laughing last is laughing best.
J. Lesson: Opposing or touching God's anointed ministers is folly e.g. Miriam, Korah, etc.