Jeremiah Chapter 20

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Chapter 20

Theme: Jeremiah is opposed for his violent pottery prophecies and regrets his ministry and even his birth.

Outline:

1-6 Jeremiah Cursed Pashur for Smiting Him

7-10 He Grieved Much from Great Opposition

11-13 He Confidently Asked God for Vengeance

14-18 He Cursed His Birth Much like Job Had

Preparatory Reading: Jeremiah 18; Jeremiah 19; I Kings 19; Jonah 4; Psalm 77.

Related Links:

1. Short Overview of Jeremiah *(slides; 2024).*
2. *Short Overview of O.T. Prophets (slides; 2023) … The Prophets of the Old Testament, here.*
3. Long Overview of O.T. Prophets *(slides; 2019), here.*
4. Introduction to Jeremiah *(sermons only; 2024), here.*
5. The Prophets of God *(sermons and outline; 2001).*
6. Rude Preachers *(sermon and outline; 2003).*
7. *Exposition of* Proverbs 18:14 *(commentary).*
8. When Things Seem Hopeless *(sermon/outline; 2004).*

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Introduction:

1. Recall our context – Jeremiah 18 was a visit to a potter, and Jeremiah 19 was breaking a clay bottle.
2. The two events with visual aids showed that Judah's sovereign God was about to crush them by war.
3. These two moving depictions of the ruin of Jerusalem moved a priest and governor to punish Jeremiah.
4. God told Jeremiah at ordination He would save him from enemies, but not that there would be none.
5. The prophet shows some subjection to human passions, but we have never endured 40 years of hatred.
6. His warnings, especially the previous chapter, were graphic enough for consternation or exasperation.
7. Judgment bad enough to eat your children and your friends in a siege would humble or make violent.
8. His object lesson of the clay bottle with the ancients and then declaring it in the temple got their ire.
9. Jeremiah is not alone with such passionate curses about his life – think Job, Elijah, David, Jonah, etc.

Jeremiah Cursed Pashur for Smiting Him – Verses 1-6

1 Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.

A. Jeremiah's summary prophecy in chapter 19 was in the court of the temple (Jer 19:14).

B. This priest, of the course of Immer (I Chr 24:14), was also chief governor of the temple.

C. The conflict described here would be very easy to foresee given their opposite positions.

D. The rebel priests and prophets promised Judah peace while Jeremiah promised its ruin.

E. Lesson: Never let authority, education, position, rank, or wealth hinder obeying truth.

F. Lesson: The truth will never be popular, which means we must prepare for persecution.

2 Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.

A. Pashur the priest and chief governor in the temple hit Jeremiah for preaching the truth.

B. After hitting him, this lying priest had Jeremiah committed to some sort of holding cell.

C. God's prophets have suffered abuses from light events like this to being sawn asunder.

D. Jeremiah got a taste of what would happen to Jesus the Son of God (Matt 26:67-68).

E. The cruelties to Christians and pastors by pagan and then papal Rome are unbelievable.

F. Lesson: Even religious persons of your own nation, former colleagues, may hate you.

G. Lesson: Truth is not popular; it is hard to learn this lesson; we assume most will love it.

3 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magormissabib.

A. Held overnight, the violent priest brought Jeremiah out of a holding cell to his presence.

B. Jeremiah, by inspiration the night before or directly here, renamed him, Magormissabib.
   1. **Pashur** = freedom; prosperity all around, on every side, everywhere. See next verse.
   2. **Magormissabib** = terror on every side, to himself and to his friends. See next verse.

C. The meaning and significance of the name change is best found in the following context.

D. Pashur should have known better, for God's protection of prophets and preachers was known (Numbers 12:1-16; 16:1-50; II Kings 1:1-17; 2:23-24; Psalm 105:14-15; etc.).

E. Jeremiah's words are by Spirit inspiration, which reveals God's opinion, not Jeremiah's.

F. Lesson: God can with a word, or an act of His will, reverse all your plans and your life.

4 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and ***to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.***

A. Magormissabib must basically mean by this explanation, terror to thyself and all friends.
B. Due to the divine name change, we can back into Pashur as generally an opposite sense.
C. Therefore, we conclude the sense of freedom and prosperity was reversed to total terror, as he and his friends feared certain death in the siege, including him watching many die.
D. Because this man preached against Jeremiah, the terror would be military desolation.
    1. Pashur would witness the deaths of his friends that put their hope in his peace lies.
    2. Pashur would see Judah fall to Nebuchadnezzar with death for captives in Babylon.
    3. Some captives did survive in Babylon, but some Jews did not survive it (Jer 21:7).
E. Fear or terror is one of God's most painful judgments, before and worse than death, for it carries torment of spirit (Deut 28:65-67; Job 18:11-21; Psalm 73:19; I John 4:18).
F. Lesson: God knows your heart and fears; He can torment you worse than death for sin.

5 Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

A. Along with the previous verse of terror and death, Jeremiah foretold the ruin of the city.
B. All that makes a city great would be taken by the Chaldeans and hauled off to Babylon.
    1. By the strength of the city, we pass over military men, for it should be transportable.
    2. Thus, we take strength to be magazines and stores of military resources and value.
    3. The accumulated labors found in valuable and worthwhile things would be taken.
    4. The precious things of every kind of art, jewels, décor, furniture, etc. would be taken.
    5. The treasures that kings can accumulate by capital and time would be confiscated.
    6. All the Babylonians could perceive as valuable for various reasons, they would take.
C. What a terrible ruin of a city! All of its valuables removed, and then it reduced to rubble.
D. Jeremiah delivered this terrible message of Jerusalem's ruin to the lying priest of peace.
E. Lesson: Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven, where Chaldeans can never touch them.
F. Lesson: The best treasure is God himself, your portion here and later (Psalm 73:23-28).

6 And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into ***captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.***

A. Jeremiah moved from Pashur in verse 4 to the city in general but returned to him here.
B. Pashur and his household, likely significant as the chief governor, would go to Babylon.
C. Instead of the fine lives they had in Jerusalem, they would be prisoners of the Chaldeans.
D. His ministry was based on lies of peace, so he and all his friends would die in Babylon.
E. They had resented Jeremiah's preaching for forty years, but they fulfilled it all perfectly.
F. Lesson: Lies sound great on the front end, but they crumble to deceit when truth arrives.
G. Lesson: Many fables and lies hit us from the world and pulpits; always prove the truth.

Section Lessons

A. Lesson: Never let authority, education, position, rank, or wealth hinder obeying truth.
B. Lesson: The truth will never be popular, which means we must prepare for persecution.
C. Lesson: Even religious persons of your own nation, former colleagues, may hate you.
D. Lesson: Truth is not popular; it is hard to learn this lesson; we assume most will love it.
E. Lesson: God can with a word, or an act of His will, reverse all your plans and your life.
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He Grieved Much from Great Opposition – Verses 7-10

7 O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

A. The issue here is Jeremiah's call to ministry and should not be confused with doctrine.
B. Jeremiah here regretted his ordination, which he ascribed to God making it sound easy.
    1. He had said he was a child and could not speak, but God overrode him (Jer 1:5-10).
    2. He told Jehovah He won the contest that he the prophet wished he had won himself.
C. He summarized ministry as being mocked daily with everyone participating in derision.
D. Lesson: Some of God's best pastors resisted the call e.g. Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah, Paul.
E. Lesson: The Bible says the office of a bishop is a good work (though trouble is painful).

8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

A. From the start, he boldly and strongly preached violence and spoil – a negative message.
B. This inspired message got him the previous verse's mocking and a daily reproach here.
C. He discharged his office faithfully, declaring God's inspired message, but all hated it.
D. Lesson: Jews then and Americans now want a positive message, so true pastors suffer.
E. Lesson: Pastors must be instant in and out of season as hearers turn from truth to fables.

9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

A. When he got tired enough to resist preaching, God's word in him forced him to go on.
B. What a description of ministerial conviction to preach! He could do nothing but preach!
C. This verse does not contradict verse 7; resisting the call is not resisting ordained content.
D. Paul similarly described necessity to preach against his own will in it (I Cor 9:16-18).
E. Lesson: A truly called man of God cannot sit idly by with truth at his disposal to preach.

10 For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

A. What a terrible picture of his ministry with opposition on all sides, both foes and friends.
B. Many were critical of his manners and content, so he was constantly fearful of trouble.
C. Others asked for any critical report they could in turn give to the authorities against him.
D. Those nearly his friends, his familiars, watched for any weakness in the hope they might entice him to say or do something wrong, so they might take revenge on God's prophet.
E. These are Jehovah's people trying to ruin Jehovah's prophet – what a profane situation!
F. Lesson: Men's hearts, even Christians, may hate Bible truth and those that preach it.

Section Lessons

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He Confidently Asked God for Vengeance – Verses 11-13

11 But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

A. Jeremiah told himself Jehovah was with him against persecutors. Note the disjunctive.

B. Our God, though a loving Father, can be like a mighty terrible one against our enemies.
   1. Recall what happened to Miriam/Aaron and Korah & Co. against Moses in Numbers.
   2. Recall what happened to 42 little children for mocking the prophet (II Kgs 2:23-25).
   3. What happened to the Jews for killing Jesus? The worst tribulation in human history.
   4. Jesus did not call for angels in Gethsemane, but He called for them forty years later.
   5. For many more angles of how God honors and protects His preachers … Miriam and Korah, Magnify Mine Office.

C. Jeremiah concluded by virtue of His mighty terrible GOD with him what would happen.
   1. His persecutors would be unable to finish their plans against him and would not win.
   2. They would end up ashamed of their conspiracy, for their plans would not work out.
   3. Their confusion and defeat would be great and last forever in the memories of men.
   4. We all know what happened to Jeremiah and his opponents – a very great difference.
   5. Nebuzaradan treated Jeremiah like royalty, but killed all his foes one way or another.

D. Lesson: Always remember the terribleness of God as a pleasant attribute for comfort.

E. Lesson: The righteous should always remember – they will win – here and/or in eternity.

12 But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

A. Note the disjunctive. Jeremiah went beyond saying God's help. He asked for vengeance.

B. He wanted to see God's judgment on his enemies rather than have to wait to hear of it.

C. This time Jeremiah called on His God as the LORD of hosts, which is all angelic armies.

D. This God examines the righteous and accepts the internal thoughts of heart and kidneys.

E. Jeremiah opened his case – many enemies against his ministry – with the perfect Judge.

F. Lesson: Always guard your thoughts, feelings, words, for our holy God knows them all.

G. Lesson: We cannot appeal to God's knowledge of our feelings and thoughts unless holy.

H. Lesson: We do not have to pray like Jeremiah until we are in a similar situation like his.

13 Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul ***of the poor from the hand of evildoers.***

A. Joyful by faith for the vengeance he would witness, Jeremiah calls for happy singing.
B. We have no way to know if God literally intervened for him or if he only had his faith.
C. Since we have no evidence of vengeance in the context, we assume his faith rose high.
D. Though he likely avoided more nights in the brig where this Pashur had him in stocks.
E. Lesson: When God delivers or helps you, make sure you praise Him (Psalm 50:14-15).

Section Lessons

A. Lesson: Always remember the terribleness of God as a pleasant attribute for comfort.
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He Cursed His Birth Much Like Job Had – Verses 14-18

14 Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

A. The close connection to singing in the previous verse may indicate some lapse of time.
B. Or, he might have recounted here the anguish, grief, and pain while in Pashur's stocks.
C. Jeremiah here returned to a Job-like lamentation about his life of misery preaching truth.
    1. Job did not sin by his grief, but accusing God (Job 32:2; 33:12-13; 34:5; 35:2; 40:8).
    2. Whether cursing his birthday or not blessing it – Jeremiah resented his overall life.
D. Let's be merciful; he was cast down, but not destroyed; he preached on (II Cor 4:8-10).
E. Elijah prefigured John the Baptist, yet Elijah was subject to our passions (James 5:17).
    1. In addition to Job and Elijah, do not overlook Moses, David, Jonah, and others that are some of the most excellent men in pages of scripture to both God and good men.
    2. We may take some comfort from their weaknesses, but we cannot presume on such.
F. It is true that Judas Iscariot should not have been born, but Jeremiah had a noble life.
G. Lesson: The best of men are yet men, and they are subject to wild passions of the flesh.
H. Lesson: When doubting righteousness in prayer, think Elijah and Jeremiah (Jas 5:17).
I. Lesson: An evidence of inspiration is that the Bible records weaknesses of its heroes.
J. Lesson: If you are reduced to such hopelessness, a living dog is better than a dead lion.
K. Lesson: While taking comfort in weaknesses of Bible heroes, do not presume on them.

15 Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

A. Jeremiah went further, criticizing the man that told his father the good news of a son.

B. The birth of a man child was always a big event in Israel in any generation (John 16:21).

C. The verbal creativity of some of God's men can be interesting, as is this blast right here.

D. Lesson: The spirit of a man can sustain him or briefly destroy him, so rule it (Pr 18:14).

E. Lesson: Though you may deny it, family and friends have likely heard your excesses.

16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;

A. Jeremiah went even further, describing his curse on the man with the news of his birth.

B. God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, with a violent overthrow, and they are said to be suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Gen 19:25; Deut 29:23; Amos 4:11; II Pet 2:6).

C. He wished this man was also cursed with fear of hearing invading soldiers (Jer 18:22).

D. Lesson: It is better to leave vengeance with God rather than drink so deeply of it as here.

E. Lesson: Recall to take heed to not fall and to think of common to man (I Cor 10:12-13).

17 Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me.

A. Jeremiah went yet further, angry at the man with news of his birth for not killing him.

B. If the man in context had not killed him, he should have died and stayed in his mother.

C. Lesson: Jeremiah recovered from this extreme despair, so we must trust God for rescue.

D. Lesson: A far better solution is to always trust in God and encourage ourselves in Him.

18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

A. Jeremiah closed down this section of ranting against his life with reasons for his pain.

B. He saw his life as nothing but labor and sorry and that effort and pain ending in shame.

C. The Psalmist also described the negative view of life as labor and sorrow (Psalm 90:10).

D. Lesson: Rejoice in Paul's rule that our next life makes up for this one (I Cor 15:19,58).

Section Lessons

A. Lesson: The best of men are yet men, and they are subject to wild passions of the flesh.

B. Lesson: An evidence of inspiration is that the Bible records weaknesses of its heroes.

C. Lesson: If you are reduced to such hopelessness, a living dog is better than a dead lion.

D. Lesson: While taking comfort in weaknesses of Bible heroes, do not presume on them.
E. Lesson: The spirit of a man can sustain him or briefly destroy him, so rule it (Pr 18:14).
F. Lesson: Though you may deny it, family and friends have likely heard your excesses.
G. Lesson: It is better to leave vengeance with God rather than drink so deeply of it as here.
H. Lesson: Recall to take heed to not fall and to think of common to man (I Cor 10:12-13).
I. Lesson: Jeremiah recovered from this extreme despair, so we must trust God for rescue.
J. Lesson: Yet, a better solution is to always trust in God and encourage ourselves in Him.
K. Lesson: Rejoice in Paul's rule that our next life makes up for this one (I Cor 15:19,58).