

JEREMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jeremiah chapter 1 as we begin our study in this fascinating and I believe very timely book and we continue our study through the Word of God. Let me set the stage for what we will be taking about in this book and the timeframe that these events took place. Jeremiah was going to watch his nation and his people go into captivity because of their sin and their refusal to turn from their sin!

The focus is the Southern Kingdom of Judah and it was during the reign of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah that Jeremiah was born. Manasseh became King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah at the age of 12 he reined for fifty-five years. His father King Hezekiah was a good King but Manasseh was truly one of the wickedest Kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Manasseh rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed as well as setting up places of worship to Baal and the Assyrian gods. He placed all kinds of pagan artifacts in the Temple of God. He got into the occult; soothsaying, witchcraft, sorcery, sought out mediums and spiritists. Not only that, but he offered his sons as sacrifices to the god Molech in the valley of Hinnom and he encouraged his people to do the same.

In II Kings 21:9-16 we see that God tried to warn them of what was coming if they continued down this path, **“But they paid no attention, and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, ‘Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols), therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel: “Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become victims of plunder to all their enemies, because they have done evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day.”’ Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the Lord.”**

Judgment was coming, there was no getting around it and yes, at the end of his life Manasseh did repent of his evil deeds, but after some fifty-plus years of leading the nation down a path of destruction, they would never fully recover. It was too little too late!

Then, after Manasseh his son Amon took to the throne and was just as evil as his father, only Amon never repented of his deeds. His reign in Judah only lasted for two years as his own servants conspired against him and killed him.

Then, after Amon his son Josiah was made King by the people. The problem was that Josiah was very young, only eight years old when he became King. But God surrounded Josiah with godly consolors, godly advisors that helped him to grow in the ways of the Lord. One of these men was Hilkiyah the priest, the father of Jeremiah most likely.

When Josiah was 16 years old he began to seek the Lord and by the age of 20 he was purging the land of all the idolatry that had overtaken it. Then, at the age of 26 he sent men to oversee the repairing of the Temple. And as they began to do the work, removing all the garbage, all the idols that had been placed in the Temple, Hilkiyah found the book of the Law that had been hidden under all this garbage.

For over fifty years the Law of God was not being read and thus it was not being followed, it was lost, but now they found it, and they brought it to the King. And as Shaphan the scribe read the Law to Josiah, the King tore his clothes and began to weep because he recognized that as a people, as a nation, they had transgressed the Words of God and because of that they were going to face the consequences of their actions.

So the King sends Hilkiyah and some men to inquire of the Lord to see what God is going to do. And these men go to Huldah the prophetess who told these men that judgment was going to come because of their transgressions, but not in the days of Josiah because his heart was right with God.

And as they told the King all these things he gathered the priests, the leaders, the people together and read from the Law of God, exhorting the people to follow the Words of God to keep His covenant that He made with them. And Josiah cleansed the land of idolatry. In fact we see reform come into this nation, but tragically it was only superficial. They went through all the motions, it was all outward but there was no emotion, nothing inward, their hearts were still far from God. They thought going to church, going to Temple was enough, but they were just exercising the motions of religion and it was not from their heart, it was not what God was looking for.

Around 609 B. C. the Egyptians marched northward to assist the Assyrians who were having trouble with the up and rising Babylonians. You see, when the Assyrian capitol of Nineveh fell in 612 B. C. their power was quickly coming to an end. And the Egyptians did not want the Babylonians to gain that much land, so they came to assist in this battle.

Now Josiah, knowing what the Assyrians did to the Northern Kingdom of Israel back in 722 B. C., about 113 years earlier, felt they would do better with the Babylonians. So Josiah takes his army into the valley of Megiddo to fight against Necho King of Egypt. And here Josiah was killed in battle, one he should have never been involved with in the first place. Josiah reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem and did bring reform, an outward cleansing, but the effects of Manasseh still permeated the hearts of the people.

After Josiah, his son Jehoahaz was made King and he only reigned for three months in Jerusalem because Necho King of Egypt deposed him and placed the brother of Jehoahaz on the throne. And Necho changed his name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim, who was nothing more than a puppet King for Necho and the Egyptians. And Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of the Lord reigning for only eleven years.

Three years into the reign of Jehoiakim, in 606 B. C. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came in and invaded Jerusalem. And Nebuchadnezzar took with him on this first deportation back to Babylon the choice men, including Daniel and his three friends.

The second deportation occurred in 597 B. C. as the Babylonians took more people captive. Then in around 595 B. C. the son of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin became King. He is also known as Coniah or Jeconiah. And he only reigned three months and ten days before the King of Babylon got tired of him and took him captive to Babylon with many costly articles.

In his place was Zedekiah, the uncle of Jehoiachin, placed there by the King of Babylon. And he was also very wicked, and that led to the third and final assault upon Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B. C. Most of the people were taken away captive or killed in battle. The Temple, the walls, their homes were destroyed. And for around six more years Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem with the few people who remained until he was sent to Egypt to minister to the Jews that had fled there for safety. It is there in Egypt that Jeremiah died.

His name, Jeremiah, means, “**the LORD will establish.**” In other words, what God is going to say through this prophet will come to pass! Also ministering during this time was Habakkuk and Zephaniah, who were also speaking to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. But make no mistake about it, the words of Jeremiah cut right to the heart of the matter and the people did not want to hear it!

Jeremiah was called the “*weeping prophet*” not because he was weak or a cry baby, but because of a broken heart as he saw the destruction of the land that God had given them and the captivity of his people, the Jews because of their sins and their refusal to repent before God.

Lord Macaulay put it like this regarding the tough ministry of Jeremiah. He wrote,

It is difficult to conceive any situation more painful than that of a great man, condemned to watch the lingering agony of an exhausted country, to tend it during the alternate fits of stupefaction and raving which precede its dissolution, and to see the symptoms of vitality disappear one by one, till nothing is left but coldness, darkness, and corruption.

- W. G. Moorehead, *Studies in the Prophecy of Jeremiah*, p. 9

Also, Dr. Moorehead gives to us a similar picture of what Jeremiah faced in this ministry that God had called him to. He wrote,

It was Jeremiah's lot to prophesy at a time when all things in Judah were rushing down to the final and mournful catastrophe; when political excitement was at its height; when the worst passions swayed the various parties, and the most fatal counsels prevailed. It was his to stand in the way over which his nation was rushing headlong to destruction; to make an heroic effort to arrest it, and to turn it back; and to fail, and be compelled to step to one side and see his own people, whom he loved with the tenderness of a woman, plunge over the precipice into the wide, weltering ruin.

- W. G. Moorehead, *Studies in the Prophecy of Jeremiah*, pp. 9-10

The point I am trying to make here is that I believe we are living in very similar days and like Jeremiah, people don't want to hear about judgment, they don't want to talk about sin, they just want to do what they want to do without any consequences and that does not work!

Imagine having a ministry for 47 years, no one wants to listen to the warnings you are giving, they are even hostile to you, that was the position Jeremiah was in. And in our day, in our nation, I believe the judgment of God is coming and like the people of Jeremiah's day, they don't want to hear it. I am not speaking of unbelievers here, I am speaking about the church, they are shutting their eyes to what is happening in our nation, the plunge into immorality!

Can you imagine if someone from the 1800's was plunged into our day, what would they think? I think they would be blown away at the depravity that we have sunk to and we have legalized our sin! And as you look at the success of Jeremiah maybe you are discouraged in what you are doing. He had no one who would listen and maybe you are in that same position, people don't want to hear what you have to say, the warnings that God has for them.

Let me share this with you because I think it is important. At the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Nike had this advertising campaign that said, "***You Don't Win Silver – You Lose Gold!***" And as harsh as that is, I think we do that many times in our own walk with the Lord, if we don't win gold you might say, we lose!

Let me say this. Can you show me where in the Scriptures that the Lord tells us that we must be successful, that we have to win gold? Yes we are to run in this race to win but that is just speaking of faithfulness. What you are doing for the Lord is not dropping in and dropping out! God calls us to be faithful and that can mean at times that we don't succeed as the world sees it. You have a gift, a talent that God has given to you and all He asks of you is to be faithful in using it and He will take care the rest. Jeremiah was faithful in his service to the Lord and as hard as it was, he did it and the Lord asks us to do the same, ***BE FAITHFUL!***

And I realize that it is not always an easy message that the Lord gives to us but it is what needs to be spoken as we will see with Jeremiah. Jeremiah is going to peel away the veneer or the façade and show them what is really in their hearts. They were comfortable with daily life and didn't even realize or didn't want to realize that judgment was coming and coming soon! It is as Kathleen Norris wrote,

The prophet, after all, is witness to a time in which his world, the society surrounding the temple in Jerusalem, meets a violent end, and Israel is taken captive to Babylon. Hearing Jeremiah's words every morning, I soon felt challenged to reflect on the upheavals in our own society, and in my life. A prophet's task is to reveal the fault lines hidden beneath the comfortable surface of the world's we invent for ourselves, the national myths as well as the little lies and delusions of control and security that get us through the day. And Jeremiah does this better than anyone.

- Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk*, p. 34

May we shine the light of Christ in this dark world, warning people of the coming judgment and pointing them to Jesus, the Savior of the world, the One who can take them out of the kingdom of darkness and place them into the kingdom of light! It is not time to hide our light or keep silent as the world heads into more and more immorality; it is descending into the abyss! May we be that watchman on the wall warning of the coming judgment because if we keep silent, we are closing our eyes on the people of this world!

One more point before we start our study in Jeremiah and I realize we have spent a long time with this introduction to this book but it is important we lay a foundation before we begin building. The last point I would like to make is this. Tradition tells us that Jeremiah, knowing that the Babylonians were coming, took the Ark of the Covenant and hid it in one of the secret passage ways under the Temple.

And you can go to Israel today and go under the Temple Mount and see some of these secret passage ways. Interestingly enough, when you read of what was taken by the Babylonians in II Kings chapter 25 you will see that many objects are mentioned. What is interesting to me is one that is important and valuable that is not mentioned and that is the Ark of the Covenant.

Some wonder why it is not mentioned because if it was taken they would have listed it in II Kings, but it was not mentioned at all! Now the people from the Temple Institute in Israel, who are planning on rebuilding the Temple, say they know where the Ark of the Covenant is located and once the Temple is rebuilt they will unveil it from one of these secret underground passages. Do they need the Ark of the Covenant to rebuild the Temple? No they don't, they did not have it during the time after their return from their Babylonian captivity to the time of Jesus and when the Temple was destroyed in 70 A. D. They don't need the Ark of the Covenant to rebuild the Temple and start the sacrifices. I guess time will tell if they have it or not. I just thought that this was something worth mentioning because the Temple is destroyed during this period of time here in Jeremiah!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Jeremiah chapter 1 starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JEREMIAH 1**VERSES 1-3**

1. Here we are given the timeframe for the ministry of Jeremiah. He began ministering in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah or in 627 B. C. and the last invasion of the Babylonians on the Southern Kingdom of Judah was in 586 B. C. and Jeremiah continued on at least to 580 B. C. and maybe longer as he ministered to the Jews down in Egypt, those who fled there for safety after the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem and after some rebel Jews killed the governor that the Babylonians put in place, Gedaliah. So his ministry was at least 47 years and again, it may have been longer.

He was called into the ministry at a young age, maybe 17 or 18 years old and we are told that his lineage is from the priestly family and they lived in Anathoth, which was located about 2 or 3 miles north of Jerusalem. And if you remember from the book of Joshua, the priests did not get an inheritance but throughout the land each tribe was to give to them cities in which to live in, and Anathoth was one of them. (See Joshua 21 and specifically 21:18)

VERSES 4-5

1. I am not sure how anyone can read this and still think that abortion is not murder! In Psalm 139:13-16 the Psalmist tells us, **“For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.”** Life is a gift from God, may we not take that lightly or destroy what God has given to us!

And think about this for a minute. Just as God formed Jeremiah, knew him before he was even conceived, God knows us and has set us apart for a work that He wants us to do. He prepared the work for us and He has prepared us for the work and all we must do is walk. You see, God has a plan for our life; we need to take those steps of faith as He leads us.

Paul put it like this in Ephesians 2:10, **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”** Our destiny you might say has already been determined by God, we just need to walk as He is leading us.

2. Why did the Lord start out with these words to Jeremiah? I think the Lord was trying to encourage him in the work that he was to do. He is saying, “Jeremiah, I knew you before you were even a single cell in your mother’s womb. Not only did I know you before you were even conceived, but I was the One who formed you in the womb. I orchestrated the DNA to do what they needed to do to make you into the person you are today! Thus, since I knew you before you were even conceived and I was there forming you in the womb, I also have the power to set you apart for the work I want you do to, you have been appointed to be a prophet to the nations for Me Jeremiah!”

3. So the Lord has encouraged Jeremiah in this work that He has called him to do, how will Jeremiah respond to this calling? We don’t have to guess, look at what we are told next.

VERSE 6

1. As we read the response of Jeremiah we may be thinking, “How in the world could he say that? How can he doubt GOD?” And then you came to the realization that this is also speaking of you and of me! How often do we do that, God tells us that He wants us to do something and we have a million and one excuses why we can’t do it! We just don’t have the ability to do it, the resources to do it, the time to do it or whatever!

One writer put it like this in regards to Jeremiah's doubts, his excuses why he couldn't do what the Lord had set him apart to do, what the Lord had appointed him to do. He wrote,

Jeremiah's doubts find an echo in J. R. R. Tolkien's novel *The Fellowship of the Rings*. A hobbit named Frodo has been chosen to make a long and dangerous quest to destroy the one ring of power, a quest he himself would not wish to choose. "I am not made for perilous quests," cried Frodo. "I wish I had never seen the Ring! Why did it come to me? Why was I chosen?"

The answer Frodo is given is similar to the one God's prophets often receive: "Such questions cannot be answered. . . . You may be sure that it was not for any merit that others do not possess; not for power or wisdom, at any rate. But you have been chosen and you must therefore use such strength and heart and wits as you have."

- Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, p. 23

You see, it is not about ability, it is about availability. If it was because of our ability that God has called us then we would get the credit. But because God uses us far beyond our own ability, He gets the glory; He gets the praise that is due Him and not us!

2. Now we also must keep in mind that Jeremiah was a young man, maybe 17 or 18 years old when he is called into the ministry. Jeremiah realized that he could not do this, he did not have the power to speak forth these things and as scared as he was God stretched his faith and he did go forward and do the work that God had called him to do!

At least he was humble and that was a good thing. I think too many people enter ministries proud and arrogant and because of that they are not used by God. Anytime we are placed into a ministry we should see our shortcomings, our inadequacies, because it causes us to trust in the Lord and not ourselves. You see, God is not asking us to be able, but just be available! As Paul said in Philippians 4:19, “**And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**”

If God has called you to do a work don't you think He will supply the things you need to carry it out? Of course He will. Just remember that it is, “**... 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts.**” Zechariah 4:6. Make no mistake about it, when God calls you to do a work for Him, He will give you all the gifts needed to accomplish the task before you.

VERSES 7-8

1. God continues to encourage Jeremiah by telling Jeremiah that He will be with him, don't be afraid. I don't know about you, but when someone says, “Don't be afraid” I am wondering what is going to happen! Maybe you heard the story of the brave knight that was sent by the king to rescue the fair princess. And as the knight was riding out of the kingdom and the drawbridge was closing behind him the king yelled out to him, “Don't be afraid of the dragon!” And the knight yells back, “Hey, wait a minute, what dragon?”

I can honestly say that I am glad the Lord did not show me or tell me everything that I was going to go through when I became pastor up here in Manitowoc. I think I would have been afraid and probably not come! And in almost 19 years of ministry here in Manitowoc I have seen, I have heard, I have been through a lot. The key for me and for Jeremiah, and for that matter all of us, is that we need to focus on the Lord, keep our eyes upon Him and trust not only what He has promised us but to know that what He has promised He can bring to pass. We need to trust Him at His Word! ***“I will be with you!”*** I like that and I need to be reminded of that.

2. In verse 8 the Lord says, **“Don’t be afraid of their faces . . .”** Why is that? Because people can be scary! I love what J. Vernon McGee said regarding this. He said that he was glad he was on the radio because he did not have to look at people’s faces who were mad at what he had to say! Good point.

People can be intimidating, the key once again is to stay focused on the Lord, don’t look at their faces, look into the eyes of God and you will find that peace, that rest, that comfort even though their faces are contorted in all different directions as they want to kill you for what you are saying! Do not be afraid; keep your eyes on the Lord!

3. Now the Lord is going to explain what this ministry is all about. Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 9-10

1. Notice what Jeremiah was to do, speak forth the Words of God. At a time when the nation was sinking into the abyss, when immorality ran rampant and religious activity was high but it was not real, Jeremiah was not called to give forth his ideas, his philosophies but to speak forth the Word of God and that same is true in the days we are living in!

God's Word is living and power and it has the ability to change lives. The words of man are just that and they are in a constant state of change depending on what is going on that day. God's Word is unchanging and we can stand upon it!

2. Let me share with you how things can change as a church moves away from the Word of God and it is happening more often than we would like to admit today. We are told,

I walked through the doors of The First Baptist Church in the spring of 1995 after having been somewhat of a prodigal son for roughly 10 years. I had recently rededicated my life to Christ and wanted to once again be a part of a loving church family. As I entered and sat down to the joyful noise of a magnificent choir and orchestra praising God in song, my heart and soul were filled with wonder, excitement and great expectation. I was truly being prepared for worship.

When the preacher finished his sermon, I was spiritually refreshed and energized for the week ahead. His message had been clear, powerful, convicting, biblical and full of the Holy Spirit.

Over time I grew to love this brother in Christ because of his faithfulness and passion for the gospel. After visiting the church for some months, I knew I had found a church home. A couple of years later, the pastor invited me to lunch at a nearby country club he frequented where he mentioned in passing his desire to eventually do away with the First Baptist Church name and simply call it “The People’s Church”, claiming “that’s what everyone called it anyway”. Still taken by the man’s persona, I smiled and nodded in approval as he told me of wanting to take the church in “a new direction”, away from the Southern Baptist stigma that he felt had somehow hindered us in the past and move on to greater things. Unfortunately, he didn’t elaborate on what that “new direction” was and I mistakenly assumed that he meant toward a non-denominational identity.

In the coming weeks and months a new message began emanating from his pulpit not unlike what had been coming from, of all places, the presidential podium of Bill Clinton during the height of his scandals. A re-occurring theme of “tolerance, diversity and unity” seemed to permeate almost every sermon. It became increasingly clear to me that the pastor’s “new direction” was worldly and that he was now being guided by someone or something other than God. Friction grew between the two of us over the course of time as his sermons turned away from the gospel that leads to repentance and faith in Christ to the social psychology of get-alongism. Sure, the Bible calls us to live in peace with one another, to keep and maintain healthy relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ, but NOT at the expense of God . . .

. . . Today when I walk into that entertainment complex on Sunday morning where a sanctuary used to be, I see a lot of cushioned movie theater seats where pews used to be; a big multi-media projection screen where a wooden cross used to be; a half dozen choreographed entertainers performing to applause where a choir used to be; a jazz/rock band playing solos where an orchestra used to be; a young female singer leading simplistic chants before a confused audience, where a music minister used to lead great hymns of worship and praise to God and where a charming “facilitator” in a golf shirt preaches that we should all GO ALONG TO GET ALONG, where a once humble man of God in a suit and tie used to courageously proclaim the Word of God.

- <http://standupforthetruth.com/2014/04/traditional-transitional-transformational-slow-suicide-many-churches/>

There is the danger and there is the warning and we are not to keep silent about these things but we are to warn of what is coming as we turn from the truths of God found in the Word of God, as we turn away from the Lord! That is what Jeremiah was doing and it is what we are to do!

3. So Jeremiah was to speak forth the Words of God and notice in verse 10 what that was going to accomplish in nations and kingdoms as he spoke forth the Words of God, “**. . . To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.**” These words are repeated in several other chapters of Jeremiah to reaffirm that this is His calling, as he speaks forth the Words of God it will root out, pull down, destroy, throw down in order to build up and plant! (Jeremiah 18:7; 24:6; 31:28; 42:10; 45:4)

What is this all about? You see, before God could rebuild and plant there needed to be some demolition and cleaning up of the garbage that had overtaken the nation and the people. All the religiosity, all the pagan practices, all the playing church and-so-on God had to get rid of so that He could do a work in their own lives and the life of the nation!

Make no mistake about it; God is doing that in our lives, tearing down all the junk we are trusting in, removing all the garbage we are holding onto. It is after that we see Him build us up, plant seeds in our lives that will grow and bear fruit in us. Let go of the junk and the garbage so God can work!

4. As we move on we are going to see three object lessons that God is showing Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 1:11-12 Jeremiah sees an almond tree and the idea here is that the Word of God will blossom forth. Then, in Jeremiah 1:13-16 Jeremiah sees a boiling pot and the picture here is that of judgment being poured out. And lastly, in Jeremiah 1:17-19 an iron pillar and the focus here is that of Jeremiah, that he will stand strong in the work that God has called him to do! So let's look at these three object lessons and see what the Lord has for us as we study them.

VERSES 11-12

1. This first object lesson deals with the almond tree. The almond tree was the first tree in Israel to bud and produce fruit around late January. What is interesting is that the Hebrew word for "**almond tree**" is "awakening tree." What does that mean? I think the idea here is that when this tree began to blossom it was a sign that spring was coming.

What is the point that the Lord is making? I think the Lord is saying to Jeremiah that when you see the things that I am going to tell you come to pass you will know that judgment is coming! In other words, God's Word is not going to fail and when you see the beginning of these things you know that judgment is at the door!

2. In Matthew 24:32-35 Jesus said, **“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near - at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”**

Jesus is also speaking of judgment and He is speaking of the Tribulation Period. In this parable from the fig tree Luke also records it for us and we see in Luke 21:29-33 that Luke makes this distinction, **“... ‘Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.’”**

In other words, this is an agriculture reference not a symbolic one or the focus is not the regathering of the Jews back into the land. I think the point that Jesus is making here is that the generation that see's these things happening, these birth pains, will see the Second Coming of Jesus, for it is only 7 years from the starting point to its culmination.

Then what about this word “**generation**”? The word “**generation**” in the Greek is GENEÁ, (ghen-eh-ah’) and it speaks of a race or nationality. Thus, the preservation of this nation, the Jews, tells us that the Lord’s return is close, for many have tried to destroy them and many want them destroyed. And these Jews that see these signs, they will not pass away until the Lord comes back. So in a sense it is speaking of the Jewish people, not as fig trees but the generation that sees this will not pass away, they will not be eliminated or exterminated, the Lord will come back, the Lord will save them!

Now that we understand that this is an analogy with nature, we see in verse 33 Jesus say, “**... when you see all these things ...**” In other words, when you see the events that were described in verses 4-26 understand that His return is getting close, very close, it is at the door!

How can we be so sure that these things will take place? Listen to what Jesus said in verse 35, “**Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.**” We can stand on the solid ground of God’s Word knowing that what He has said will come to pass!

Isn’t it amazing what we place our trust in and in the end that will all pass away except the Word of God! It is eternal, His truths are unchanging. In fact, the second law of thermodynamics tells us everything is wearing down, heading towards disorder, falling apart - except God’s Word! I like that. God’s Word stands, it does not get old, it does not decay, it does not fall apart or become outdated. It is living and it is powerful and it will change lives. Thus, we need to believe it; trust it; apply it to our life!

Like Jeremiah, the Lord is telling us to look for the signs of His return, of His judgment upon a Christ rejecting world. And as many like to deny this or think it is foolish, they did the same thing in Jeremiah's day and guess what? Judgment came upon them; they were taken into captivity by the Babylonians just as God's Word said!

We have God's Word and it is kind of an alarm clock to wake-up a sleeping generation to what is coming just as it was in Jeremiah's day! Think about it. How many of you love your alarm clock? I am sure when it goes off that is the last thing you want to hear in the morning and yet, if you want to get up you need to answer that call!

The same is true today. God's Word is like an alarm clock as I have said and when we sound off, when we speak forth the Word of God and speak of sin, when we speak of judgment, the world tries to turn off the alarm! May we not stop speaking God's Word and be like Jeremiah, share the truths of God found in the Word of God and let God work by His Spirit on the hearts and minds of the people of this world to awaken them out of their spiritual sleep!

And make no mistake about it, as Paul said in II Corinthians 1:20, "**For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.**" They will come to pass; all of God's Word will come to pass! As we are told, "**Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.'**" Jeremiah 1:12.

VERSES 13-16

1. The second object lesson that the Lord gives to Jeremiah is that of this "**boiling pot.**" In the Hebrew the word is NAPHACH, (naw-fakh') and it doesn't mean "boiling" but it actually is speaking of "blown upon." In other words, "**I see a blown upon pot . . .**"

The idea here is that the fires are being stoked, they are being fanned and this small fire of these embers are bursting into flames and causing the pot to boil over, to spill over. And the Lord explains to Jeremiah that this is speaking of the coming judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah and that this judgment was coming from the north!

Keep in mind that Assyria and Egypt were losing their strength and a new empire, the Babylonians was heating up, they were getting stronger and they would not only defeat the Assyrians and the Egyptians but they would also come down upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah! And this boiling pot is going to spill over to the south and destroy all that is in its path! Now we will deal with this in a few minutes, but Babylon is not just to the north of Israel, they are really to the east, the northeast, so how can this be speaking of Babylon? We will see, hang in there.

2. How could God do this to His people? That does not seem fair! That does not seem right! And that is what happens many times, we like to blame God for what is happening to us when in reality, we have brought these things upon ourselves many times. God lets them know why this was happening to them, **“I will utter My judgments Against them concerning all their wickedness, Because they have forsaken Me, Burned incense to other gods, And worshiped the works of their own hands.”** Jeremiah 1:16.

God was bringing judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their wickedness, because they had turned from the Lord and went after the false god's. Now the Babylonians were to the northeast of Jerusalem, not just the north. So how can this speak of them? The answer is really simple when you look at what the Babylonians did. They first conquered Assyria to the north and then came down from the north upon Jerusalem, which was the route to take.

Judgment was coming upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah and there was no escaping it anymore. They refused to get right with God and as God had warned them, this was what was going to happen to them!

VERSES 17-19

1. The third object lesson that the Lord gives to Jeremiah is this iron pillar or this strong fortress. And point here is that the Lord is saying to Jeremiah, “Jeremiah, you are this iron pillar, not because you are so strong, but because I am and I will work through you. Do the work that I have called you to do, you will prevail!”

Why did Jeremiah need that encouraging? Remember what we read in Jeremiah 1:6, words that Jeremiah spoke to the Lord when the Lord was calling him into ministry, “... ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.” Also, we are told here, “... Do not be dismayed before their faces, Lest I dismay you before them.” Jeremiah 1:17.

In other words, “Jeremiah, are you for Me or against Me? If you are for Me you will not lose, if you are against Me you will not succeed!” It is not always easy and if it was easy for us to do then would we really need God, would we really have to rely on God? Of course we wouldn’t and that is the point. When we are weak and He is strong!

And Jeremiah is given assurance by God that they will not prevail against him. Yes they will assault Jeremiah, they will speak against Him, throw him in a pit, threaten him, but they will not succeed in their efforts to silence Jeremiah!

Let me share this story with you because as much as the enemy tries to silence the people of God, they can't. God is in control and it is amazing what He can do. John wrote Revelation on the Island of Patmos, banished there to silence him and yet, it didn't! Listen to what happened in the life of John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress. We are told,

John Bunyan's preaching was so popular and powerful, and so unacceptable to leaders in the seventeenth-century Church of England, that he was jailed in order to silence him. Refusing to be silent, he began to preach in the jail courtyard. He not only had a large audience of prisoners, but also hundreds of the citizens of Bedford and the surrounding area would come to the prison daily and stand outside to hear him expound Scripture. He was silenced verbally being placed deep inside the jail and forbidden to preach at all.

Yet in that silence, he spoke loudest of all and to more people than he could have imagined. It was during that time that he wrote The Pilgrim's Progress, the great Christian classic that has ministered the gospel to tens of millions throughout the world. For several centuries, it was the most widely read and translated book in the world after the Bible. Bunyan's opponents were able to stop his preaching for a few years, but they were not able to stop his ministry. Instead, they provided opportunity for it to be extended from deep within a jail in the small town of Bedford to the ends of the earth.

- John MacArthur

You can't chain God's Word and as much as they try, it is spoken even louder and bolder! Interestingly enough the people that were coming against Jeremiah were his own people. They didn't like what he was saying. We see that same thing happen today and yes, with our biological family many times but even more so with our spiritual family, the church is coming against those that are standing up for God and His Word and they are trying to silence us by their words, their teachings, their threats and-so-on.

Here's the thing. No matter what we are going through, no matter who is coming against us, remember what the Lord said in Isaiah 41:10, "**Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.**" That should bring comfort to our hearts and to our lives.

Listen to what John Calvin wrote regarding these verses,

This passage contains a useful doctrine, from which we learn that strength shall never be wanting to God's servants, while they derive courage from the conviction that God himself is the author of their calling . . . for God will then supply them with strength and courage invincible, so as to render them formidable to the whole world: but if they be unhinged and timid, and turn here and there, and be influenced by the fear of men, God will render them base and contemptible, and make them to tremble at the least breath of air, and they shall be wholly broken down. . . ."

- John Calvin, A Commentary on Jeremiah, Vol. 1, p. 64

Paul, in Galatians 1:10 put it like this, **“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”** Who are you going to serve, man or God? Who are you going to fear, man or God? Paul said that his life was lived in such a way to honor God, to serve Him and in doing so man will hear and see what they need to hear and see but they will not always like it! Be a God pleaser and not a man pleaser and today, we have reversed that and we see the problems that have come up in the church because of it. Serve the Lord!

2. Let me close with these thoughts. God is calling Jeremiah to speak forth these words with boldness. You can't be an effective minister of God and worry about what people are going to think about you, how they are going to respond to what you have to say. Remember what Paul told Timothy, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”** II Timothy 4:2.

I think many times we hear what people are saying about us, we see their faces and how angry they are because of what we have said, and we shy away. We need to be bold, we need to be strong because our God is with us!

I would like to share just a couple of verses to encourage you to be bold, be strong in the Lord.

- Psalm 31:24 – **“Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, All you who hope in the Lord.”**
- Psalm 38:15 – **“For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.”**
- Psalm 39:7 – **“And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.”**
- II Corinthians 3:12 – **“Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech.”**

You see, it is not about us, but about Him. Don't lose the focus as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

The citizens of Feldkirch, Austria, didn't know what to do. Napoleon's massive army was preparing to attack. Soldiers had been spotted on the heights above the little town, which was situated on the Austrian border. A council of citizens was hastily summoned to decide whether they should try to defend themselves or display the white flag of surrender. It happened to be Easter Sunday, and the people had gathered in the local church.

The pastor rose and said, "Friends, we have been counting on our own strength, and apparently that has failed. As this is the day of our Lord's resurrection, let us just ring the bells, have our services as usual, and leave the matter in His hands. We know only our weakness, and not the power of God to defend us." The council accepted his plan and the church bells rang. The enemy, hearing the sudden peal, concluded that the Austrian army had arrived during the night to defend the town. Before the service ended, the enemy broke camp and left.

- Source Unknown

Jeremiah is going to face some heavy challenges, it is going to be difficult for him and at times he will get frustrated and discouraged, but the Lord will get him back on track. Our eyes need to be on Him because we too will face heavy challenges in our life, it will be difficult as we speak forth the Words of God to a people who no longer want to hear it but they need to hear it. So don't keep silent because before there is the building there needs to be the rooting out, the pulling down and God will do that as He works in us and through us for His glory!