

Fact Sheet for **“Jeremiah’s Calling”**
Jeremiah 1:1-19

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Today we’re beginning the book of Jeremiah. He is often referred to as “The Weeping Prophet” because of the nature of his ministry. He prophesied judgment on Jerusalem and the resulting Babylonian captivity because of the idolatry and sins of the Jewish people. God said that they would not listen to him, and they would fight against him.

How should we approach this book? 1) We won’t be covering every verse. Given Jeremiah’s message and the length of this book (52 chapters), covering every verse would be a long... tough... slog. Instead I will be selecting passages. 2) will be selecting those passages that will help you grasp the outline of this book. 3) This book gives you a lot of insight into God’s character and His dealings with those who serve Him.. This is where many of our applications for life today will be drawn from.

Jeremiah’s Background (1:1-3)

ESV 1:1 ¶ The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 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. ³ It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Jeremiah prophesied during the last 41 years of the kings of Judah. It was during his ministry that Daniel and his three friends were born, and later taken to Babylon. Jeremiah saw the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon’s temple. Five years into Jeremiah’s ministry the Book of the Law was discovered in the temple as Josiah was renovating it (2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 34). But the sins of an earlier king of Judah, Manasseh, had sealed the fate of Jerusalem (2 Kings 21; Jeremiah 15:4).

Jeremiah’s Call (1:4-10)

⁴ ¶ Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵ “BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB I KNEW YOU, AND BEFORE YOU WERE BORN I CONSECRATED YOU; I APPOINTED YOU A PROPHET TO THE NATIONS.”

Take a good... hard... look at these words. That word “knew” means far more than intellectual knowledge. It was used of the intimate relations experienced by a husband and wife (Genesis 4:1). It also can have the meanings “find out, experience, recognize, perceive, understand, have insight, become acquainted with, care about, be concerned about”, and even “select or choose.” This last meaning makes the best sense in the context of these two verses (God chose, consecrated, and appointed Jeremiah). In fact the Christian Standard Bible that was just published by Holman and the NET Bible translate this “I chose you.” Here are two other passages with a similar translation of this same word Genesis 18:17-19 (ESV, NASB, NET, NIV) and Amos 3:1-2 (ESV, NASB, NET, NIV). So, you could translate this line in Jeremiah 1:5 as **“BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB I CHOSE YOU.”**

The second line uses the word “consecrated”, a word that means “made holy” (like the items in the tabernacle) or “set apart.” The first, second, and third lines of Jeremiah 1:5 add to one another, much like Hebrew poetry that rhymes in thought. This could easily indicate that the choosing, the consecrating, and the appointing of Jeremiah all may have taken place before Jeremiah was conceived. What a calling!

⁶ Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." ⁷ But the LORD said to me, "DO NOT SAY, 'I AM ONLY A YOUTH'; FOR TO ALL TO WHOM I SEND YOU, YOU SHALL GO, AND WHATEVER I COMMAND YOU, YOU SHALL SPEAK. ⁸ DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEM, FOR I AM WITH YOU TO DELIVER YOU, DECLARES THE LORD."

Jeremiah at this time was young, perhaps in his early 20’s (“I am only a youth”). These words are harbingers of a tough ministry ahead for Jeremiah, but God promised to protect him.

⁹ Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, "BEHOLD, I HAVE PUT MY WORDS IN YOUR MOUTH. ¹⁰ SEE, I HAVE SET YOU THIS DAY OVER NATIONS AND OVER KINGDOMS, TO PLUCK UP AND TO BREAK DOWN, TO DESTROY AND TO OVERTHROW, TO BUILD AND TO PLANT."

Jeremiah's Confirming Visions(1:11-16)

¹¹ ¶ And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see an almond branch." ¹² Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it."

There is a play on words here. The Hebrew word for "almond" is pronounced "sha-qeid." The Hebrew word for "watching" is pronounced "sha-qad." God watches out over His word to perform it. The NIV translates verse 12 this way... "The LORD said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled." There are two verses you have heard that go right along with this (Isaiah 55:10-11).

¹³ ¶ The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north." ¹⁴ Then the LORD said to me, "Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵ For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the LORD, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. ¹⁶ And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.

The KJV translates verse 13 this way... "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." The KJV thought is that when Jeremiah faced the north he could see the face of the pot. In other words that pot is timed toward the south. When the Babylonians would come to destroy Jerusalem they would travel through that part of the world called "the fertile crescent" and would approach Jerusalem from the north. And remember, the Babylonians were a world empire, made up of several smaller kingdoms and peoples. And this consequence would come upon them for their stubborn desire to walk away from the God of Scripture. And think about it for a moment. God would deftly direct the events of human history through peoples who did not worship Him as God.

Jeremiah's Challenge (1:17-19)

¹⁷ But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. ¹⁸ And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. ¹⁹ They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you."

Jeremiah was not going to have an easy ministry! In verse 17 the Hebrew word for "dismayed" and "dismay" means "be shattered", or "be filled with terror." Jeremiah had a choice. If he allowed himself to be terrified by his opponents God would terrify him more before them. The only way to avoid this was by being strong in the face of their opposition. Then God would deliver him from them.

So, what has this passage told us about God and the way He works with us?

- 1 – God knows the future as well as the past. This includes your future.
- 2 – God can choose details of a person's life before they are conceived. Do you have a sense of God's calling on you?
- 3 – Trust in God's protection as you serve Him well.
- 4 – God will always watch out over His Word to see that it is fulfilled. Count on it.
- 5 – God may bring consequences for sin in this life, let alone in the one to come.
- 6 – God does direct the course of human history to meet His purposes.
- 7 – Ministry can get tough, but don't let this shatter you.