

Jeremiah 1:1 – 3

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~ Our Spiritual Safari returns to the Old Testament prophecy of Jeremiah in this report. This book of the Bible is an eye-opening journey through a profoundly unfamiliar eschatological jungle. Most of you have never been this way before. Jeremiah wrote two of the most important books of the Bible: this prophecy and Lamentations. Almost all of the other prophets maintain anonymity; that is, they didn't project themselves onto the pages of their prophecies. But Jeremiah did. This prophecy is almost an autobiography as he spells out deeply personal information; to the point that it almost becomes embarrassing. I suppose Jeremiah didn't want us to miss any details about himself. Interestingly, even so, very few Christians really know or understand this prophet on any level. The average believer could not tell you who his message is directed to, or what it is about. Prophecy-mongers incessantly misquote Jeremiah whom they, literally, know *NOTHING* about; in an attempt to form and support their personal, self-professing philosophy of religion.

Well, Jeremiah was born a priest in Anathoth; about ten miles northeast of Jerusalem. Anathoth was a city in the tribe of Benjamin – not Judah. He was chosen to be a prophet before he was born. He began functioning in his prophetic office at a very young age. He was personally commissioned by God to be this particular prophet at this particular time with this particular message to these particular people about their particular present problems – meaning the nation Israel in Jeremiah's day. That is very, very important to keep in full context in this prophecy.

Jeremiah began his ministry during the reign of King Josiah – and Jeremiah, apparently, attended Josiah's funeral. Josiah had been a good king in the midst of a list of several very bad kings of the southern kingdom of Judah throughout Bible history. The people knew a bad king was to be next on the throne. They also had this imminent threat from Babylon. Jeremiah was forbidden to marry because of the terrible times in which he lived, and Jeremiah never made a single convert in his life, either. He was flatly rejected and dismissed out of hand by all nations, by his own family and, of

course, by Israel. He was hated, beaten, ridiculed, put in stocks, and cruelly thrown in the dungeon after being declared a traitor. Remember, Jeremiah's political advice was to stop resisting Nebuchadnezzar, because the more they resisted, the angrier and crueler Babylon became. Resistance was futile at this time, and continuing to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar was not in Israel's best interest, to say the least.

Jeremiah has been called the prophet with a broken heart. The message God called him to give to Israel brought him deep anxiety and fear. Jeremiah tried to resign, but God wouldn't let him. He had witnessed the nation fall into Babylonian captivity, and the total destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by the time he started writing. I'm sure it evoked horror in his mind to lay on his bed at night recalling the sights and sounds of the Babylonian army beating God's chosen people into submission.

Seventy years later, he saw the nation return from captivity under Ezra and Nehemiah to a destroyed temple and burned out city. Interestingly, he had been permitted to remain in the land of Israel by the captain of the Babylonian forces during the entire seventy years of captivity. The other remaining inhabitants eventually became so disillusioned with the plight of the land, and they were so discouraged by the destruction of the temple, that they decided it was going to be too much work, and they fled to Egypt. Jeremiah was forced to go with them; and tradition says he was stoned by them in Egypt.

Jeremiah was a complainer, as we shall see. He was a man in constant tears. He listened to God, but he also told God all that was in his heart. I think he hid the tears from those around him, but spoke to God sincerely, poignantly and, obviously, emotionally, about the things he thought weren't right. Jeremiah wasn't some accomplished public protest speaker, though. Even with the perpendicular iatus Jeremiah initially presents, I still don't think he was trying to make a name for himself. He certainly wasn't anything like Job had been. No, I think Jeremiah had a trembling voice and tear-filled eyes. I see him as having shaky hands. You will recall that Jesus asked the apostles, *"who do men say I am?"* the apostles answered, *".... some say Jeremiah...."* That's when Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Jeremiah is the type of man God called to deliver a bitterly harsh message of judgment

to the nation Israel, my friends. The corporate world would not select Jeremiah to deliver a report for them; they would get a hard-boiled man. But not God. God chose Jeremiah for what's coming up, and God's message to Israel broke Jeremiah's heart.

During the early days of Jeremiah's life, in which Judah was still rushing headlong toward their final and mournful catastrophe, and immediately prior to being taken away in captivity, politics and pleasure were the only things that mattered. Josiah, a good king, was now dead; Jehoahaz, a very bad king, was coming to the throne. Fatal councils prevailed. Jeremiah makes a heroic effort to set a standard for their immoral society, and to turn them back to the Lord. That's when he learned what it means to fail miserably. That's when Jeremiah was compelled to step aside and observe the nation he loved so dearly go over the precipice and into the wide-welter of ruin. These are tremendous realities to get into our thinking about this prophet.

I think we are living in just such a time in the United States as I type this report and you read it. We have a completely corrupt government leading contemptuous chaos. Our current trajectory will lead to national destruction. There is no other possible logical result of current world politics, other than (a) socialist disaster, or (b) world war. To believe that man can solve mankind's problems today such as, for example, the Arab's hatred of the nation Israel, is simply not credible. Push the Muslim hard enough in his own land and see what happens. To believe we can make "*deals*" for peace is absurd - not to mention contrary to the teachings of the Word of God. Islamic extremists die offensively for their beliefs. We attempted every theory of peace decades ago in the Middle East. It didn't work. Nothing has changed. See, Israel was worshipping in the temple in the days in which we are studying - which they don't do today because they have no temple - but their hearts were *already* very far from God back then. Nothing has changed, friends. In fact, Israel denied the True and Living God in that day, just as they do today. That's what Jeremiah had to deal with. See, they were claiming God, but had turned their back on Him. So, God turned His back on His people, according to His promises, and they were going to go into Babylonian captivity now. The time had come to be

removed from the land. That was Jeremiah's message. It was not well-received.

Today, Capital Hill's crony Christianity has an altogether different "Jesus" than the Lord Jesus Christ of the Word of God. Christ, the Son of God, is not governments' Blessed Hope and Savior. No, their false, American, liberal Jesus is a glorified errand-boy to them. When they're finished whipping Him, they'll nail Him back to the cross. They claim a religion which, frankly, renders them blasphemous; they're the only ones who don't understand it. Easy-believism from the fifteenth floor of the Hyatt Grand Cypress Hotel Concierge Level is altogether different from recognizing you are a sinner who needs a Savior. Theirs is a "Jesus" that doesn't exist. There is no record of the modern American Jesus. Jeremiah was telling Israel they were worshiping a God that doesn't exist. They didn't care to be reminded of that fact, either. They knew they were hypocrites. They just didn't care.

I know this so-called safari is not presenting popular theology today. I find it interesting that this report falls during this particular time in American history. Well, there are certain things you just don't say if you want to be popular, make friends, influence people, and run for office; but someone has to say them — and I don't mind being that one. The modern theologian wants to bounce ideas around that will improve society. They want to form committees and panels that will work out all of our problems by stirring enough self-righteous intellect into an old think-tank and miraculously make everything great again. My friends, when you claim God, but really leave Him totally out of the picture — it is over for your nation. Finished. You can write that down.

The Bible is only mentioned in politics today with a curled lip by the crooked man who isn't quite sure what he's saying. The genuine saint of God Almighty with a genuine message from the inspired Word of God is pushed aside and ignored altogether. That's the way it is today. I know this. That's the same position Jeremiah found himself in. I feel like this book is going to have a *STRONG* and *PROFOUNDLY POWERFUL* message for anyone who will avail themselves of it in our safari. I am giving it to you straight, my beloved. Share the Word of God with others — but make sure you know

what message you're giving out. We already have too much misinformation and unsound doctrine in the church. Let's make sure we don't add to it.

Jeremiah was not a mighty man as Elijah had been. He was not nearly as eloquent as Isaiah was, and Jeremiah was not seraphic as Ezekiel will be; but, rather, he was one who was timid and shrinking, conscious of his helplessness, not confident in himself, yearning for love, acceptance and sympathy, although unable to express that desire to other people. That is the description of God's chosen man, through which the Word of the Lord came succinctly to a corrupt and degenerate age. The Lord Jesus Christ, weeping over Jerusalem, was perfect fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah. Selah ~

The campaign used to reject Jeremiah's message was an obscenely twisted plot of misinformation and disinformation by the false prophets. They called him a liar. They labeled him a traitor; and they bitterly projected their idolatry on Jeremiah, accusing him of teaching that everyone should succumb to the Babylonian form of worship. It was literally a waste of time for Jeremiah to speak to these people. They weren't listening. Isaiah, only a hundred years before, had given the message to resist the Chaldeans. The false prophets now adopted that message, but it was out of date. Jeremiah advises them to stand down, and possibly watch it all burn. They didn't like that. They deemed it hate speech. Israel wasn't about to accept that from this man. The perceived change in the message from God seemed contradictory – and it was – because Israel had become utterly contradictory to God. Well, in Jeremiah's day, the only remaining avenue forward was surrender. Resistance was futile by this time in history. In the economy of God, Israel was finished – done – through. The *"times of the Gentiles"* had already begun with Babylon, the head of gold. There was no turning the clock back now. Idolatry, in the form of rank covetousness, was rampant. Even so, God says His strange work of judgment breaks His heart. God still loves Israel in this desperately harsh prophecy. And He loves them today....

1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that 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, 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.

~ So, as our Spiritual Safari ends this first leg of Jeremiah in our expedition through the entire Word of God, let's consider a few fun facts. The primary message Jeremiah presents is backsliding. The word occurs thirteen times in this book; whereas, it occurs elsewhere in Scripture but four other times. Proverbs has "backsliding" one time, and Hosea has it three remaining times. "Babylon" occurs a whopping one hundred sixty-four times in Jeremiah; more than all other Scripture combined. Evidently, it was Jeremiah's father who had found the lost book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. Israel had misplaced God's law by this time in their history; lost in the temple, you will recall. If there's a bad place for the Word of God to get lost, it's in the church; but I would hope you understand that without me having to point it out. Well, finding the book of the law of the Lord sparked revival during the reign of King Josiah, and we'll resume our Spiritual Safari in our next report as the Word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah ~

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