

July 25

## Jeremiah 1-2

Hi, I'm Jack, International Student Director, with you to begin our experience with the prophet Jeremiah.

I particularly like this book because it contains a verse that had a life changing impact on my life. It's from 32:27: "I am the Lord the God of all Mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" Those words gave me great hope in a time of desperation, and it has become my life verse.

Jeremiah was a young man from a family of priests in a town not far from Jerusalem. God's call was clear and direct. We get clear insight into the foreknowledge of God from the call of Jeremiah. 1:4-5 tell us that he knew all about Jeremiah before he was born, and that he appointed him as a prophet even before his birth. We will see this again when we read about John the Baptist and the call on his life before his birth.

The weight of responsibility Jeremiah felt overwhelmed him, and he said "Ah, Sovereign Lord, I don't know how to speak; I'm only a child." The Lord said "don't say that! You just go where I send you and say what I tell you to say; you don't have to be afraid. I'll rescue you. I'll even put my words in your mouth." JAP (Jack Arant's Paraphrase) A few verses later he gives Jeremiah even more reinforcement. He said "Today I'm making you into a fortress city and strong as steel and bronze. Kings and authorities will fight against you, but they can't win because I'm with you and will rescue you." JAP The message Jeremiah would say would affect the destiny of nations.

The Lord then gives Jeremiah two visions that would define much of his future ministry. The first was the vision of the almond branch. It is a symbol of watching for something that is about to happen. Remember Aaron's rod? It blossomed with almonds to give visual proof that God was with Aaron. The Hebrew word for almond tree sounds like "watching". God is going to see to it that what he says will happen!

The second vision was of a boiling pot, and it is being tipped in our direction. This boiling spill represents the nations of the north invading the land of Judah and bringing severe judgment onto the people for their wickedness and idolatry.

Jeremiah's message is a tough one. No one wants to hear of bad news and judgment coming. It is a severe message from the Lord, and it will be delivered by an empowered prophet.

Chapter 2 and 3 begin to lay out the reason for this coming invasion. Israel is pictured as a young bride, full of love and devotion to her husband. He gave her everything she could have wanted and protected her and cared for her. Amazingly, she became unfaithful and pursued other lovers, and bad ones at that! Even those nations who worshipped worthless gods were more faithful to them than Israel was to the only true God!

They turned from a life-giving stream to empty storage tanks. They grew totally wild and corrupt, craving foreign gods more and more, continually adding to their collection of gods. It reminds me of the wild strawberries in my back yard- tiny, tasteless and useless, a useless weed needing to be destroyed.

This once innocent blushing bride is now like the prostitute described in Proverbs that eats and wipes her mouth and says "I've done nothing wrong."

His bride has turned her back and forgotten her love, her God, her only help and hope. Instead of trusting her God, and acknowledging her sin, she denies it, and runs to foreigners- Egypt and Assyria for help, but they will only bring them into captivity.

The first verses of Chapter 3 tell us even more of the hardness of the unfaithful nation. When obvious judgment comes, she calls to him as her Father and friend, but she is not even able to blush for her shameful prostitution. She wants his blessing even as she runs after evil.

This is a tough message to start a book with, but there are applications here for us.

First, God knows us, and he can give us courage to carry his message. Jeremiah was given boldness to proclaim it. Paul requested prayer for boldness. God can help us!

Second, we serve the only true God whose nature is faithfulness. He expects us to be faithful to him, especially in the light of all he's done for us!

Third, unfaithfulness leads to ruin. The things we run after to satisfy our desires outside of his will are like the false gods Israel chased after. Our big challenge in this life is to keep our God ever before us and loving him our hearts desire.

We live in a day of great unfaithfulness, much like the times of Jeremiah. Jeremiah's sobering message is a heartbreaking one for us to ponder. He is known as the weeping prophet. He grieved over the sin of his people. So must we.