



WEEK 2

Reflection notes on Jeremiah

September-November 2021

Jeremiah's Call: Hope and Lament in a Time of Change

From 12 September to 28 November, we're exploring the book of Jeremiah in a sermon series. We encourage you to read over the assigned passages of Scripture and to reflect prayerfully in the week before each sermon. This will help you better understand the narrative and how God might be speaking to you and our church community as we grow together.

Week 2: Introduction to Jeremiah (for 19 Sept.)

'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.'—Jeremiah 1:5
(Please read all of chapter 1)

Everyone has a history, a context in which their character is formed. From family and cultural attributes to political and spiritual circumstances, a variety of influences shape who we are and how we respond to the world around us.

Jeremiah's story is no different. He ministered in a difficult time, 627 B.C., from the reign of Judah's last good king (Josiah) to sometime after the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians in 587. He was a youth when God first called him, and grew into what today we'd call a 'biblical theologian', one who embraced and used truths from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Hosea, the Psalms and other passages. As a result of his knowledge of scripture and of God, he knew how depraved human nature is and yet how only God—who is absolutely trustworthy—can cure and change the human heart.

The first chapter of Jeremiah provides a lovely biography of the author: verses 1-3 give us his genealogy and cultural history, while the rest become his 'testimony' of sorts. We see how the words of Jeremiah (v1) confirm his authorship and yet they also reflect 'the word of the Lord' (v4), what John Stott calls the 'double authorship of Scripture, the word of God through the words of men.' It is no coincidence then that John identifies Jesus as, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory' (John 1:14).

Because God had long appointed prophets to bring his word to his people and restore their relationship, ultimately fulfilled in the final 'prophet' of Jesus, we hear

in v5 God's intimate call to a young and inexperienced Jeremiah: even while he was in his mother's womb, God formed him and set him apart for what was to come.

Who among us wouldn't wonder if God had got it 'right' when as a teen we'd heard him say we were to be his spokesperson?! Jeremiah understandably questions the Almighty's call and yet God comes back with beautiful promise: 'Do not be afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you' (v8). God doesn't guarantee great results or an easy journey for Jeremiah, only that God will be with him. And his presence will be enough.

God goes a step further to define Jeremiah's three-fold specific mission in v9&10: Jeremiah was to, 'uproot and tear down, destroy and overthrow, build and plant.' Talk about a specific call and strategic plan! As God then warns Jeremiah of the coming disasters (v14) and subsequent battles at the gates of Jerusalem, Jeremiah nonetheless would preach this 'full orb'd' message over the next 40 years of his ministry. His life anchored always in the reality that 'I am with you', Emmanuel!

Reflection Questions:

1. How does Jeremiah 1:5 speak to you today?
2. What do you think Jeremiah's specific mission (v9&10) will look like in the chapters ahead?
3. How has the reality of God's presence in your life given you courage lately?

Prayer: *Almighty God, thank you that you know each of us in our mother's wombs and prepare us for your purposes. Help us to respond to your call with confidence, knowing you are with us! Amen.*

Sources: John Stott, 'Through the Bible Through the Year'; English Standard Version Study Bible.