

# **Jeremiah Lesson 2**

## **Jeremiah 1: 1-19**

# Jeremiah

- Son of the Priest Hilkiah; Possible Descendant of Abiathar, David's Priest
- No Evidence That Jeremiah Was Trained in Priestly Duties, But That is a Logical Occupation for a Levite
- Jeremiah Was Born When Manasseh Was King of Judah; Godly Priests Would Not Have Been Appreciated There
- Anathoth Was Only 3 Miles Northeast of Jerusalem



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# Jeremiah's Call

- “I’m Only a Youth” (Jeremiah 1:6); Well Below Age 30
- Being a Priest Was Predictable. One Only Had to Follow Torah Law.
  - Offer Sacrifices
  - Examine Lepers
  - Exclude Unclean People; Reinstate Cleansed People
  - Conduct Official Ceremonies
  - Teach the Law
- Priests, From the Tribe of Levi, Were Generally Respected and Had Authority

# Jeremiah's Call

- Being a Prophet Was Unpredictable
  - People Often Didn't Want to Hear What You Preached
  - Prophets Often Unwelcome and Faced Threats
  - Priests Were Supported From the People's Sacrifices and Offerings; Prophets Had No Guaranteed Income
  - Prophets Were Not Stationary
  - A Prophet Had to Frequently Prove His Divine Call
  - Prophets Didn't Always Know What God Wanted Them to Say Until He Gave Them His Word
  - Jeremiah 1:7

# Jeremiah's Call

- Jeremiah 1:10
  - The Call Was Extensive; It Speaks of God's Sovereignty
  - The Call Was Destructive; Pluck Out the Weeds
  - The Call Was Constructive; Build Men Into Temples For the Holy God to Dwell In
- The Call Was Personal and Intimate
- God Foreknew Jeremiah
- The Call Fulfills Deuteronomy 18:18

# The Vision of the Almond Branch

- Anathoth Was a Center For Almond Growing Then and Now
- The Vision Would Have Resonated With Jeremiah
- He Understood the Reference to a Coming Spring As Well as the Immediacy of the Outcome of Words He Spoke at God's Direction



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# The Vision of the Boiling Pot

- Over the Centuries, Many of Israel's Enemies Came From the North: the Syrians, the Philistines, and the Assyrians
- "The North Was a Symbol For Dark Powers Often of Uncertain Origin"
- The Prophet Isaiah Prophesied About Babylon in 2 Kings 20:16-18
- The Full Scripture Was Fulfilled During the Reign of King Jehoiakim, Josiah's Son (2 Kings 24:2)



*The Vision of the Boiling Pot;*  
[www.chucklarsen.com](http://www.chucklarsen.com)

# Breaking the Covenant

- Israel Failed to Follow the Stipulations of Exodus 34
  - Failed to Tear Down Altars to Other Gods
  - Sacrificed to Other Gods
  - Ate Food Sacrificed to Idols
  - Intermarried With Non-Believers
  - Failed to Keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths)
  - Failed to Bring Their First Fruit Offerings to “God

# The Final Words of Jeremiah 1

- Reminiscent of God's Words to Joshua Before He Led the People Into the Promised Land (Joshua 1:9)
- Jeremiah 1:19
  - Jeremiah Remembered Joshua 1:9
  - Jeremiah Was Comforted By God's Words to Him Also

## Jeremiah

### Lesson 2: Jeremiah 1: 1-19

- We read in the opening verses of Jeremiah 1 that he was the son of the priest Hilkiah in the small town of Anathoth in the tribe of Benjamin.
- Some scholars have suggested that Hilkiah was a descendant of Abiathar who was David's priest. King Solomon expelled Abiathar to his hometown in Anathoth for his part in supporting Adonijah as King of Judah while King David was old.
- There is no evidence to suggest that Jeremiah was trained in priestly duties, but as a Levite, that would have been his logical occupation.
- Jeremiah was born when Manasseh was King of Judah. Manasseh undid the reforms of his father Hezekiah and reinstituted idol worship in Judah. He also burned his son as an offering to the God Molech. As you studied in this week's lesson, Manasseh's grandson Josiah again followed the Lord and instituted religious reforms. However, the people did not consistently worship Yahweh. Godly priests would not have been appreciated in Judah.
- The village of Anathoth was only 3 miles northeast of Jerusalem. One could see the walls of Jerusalem from there.
- In Jeremiah 1:6, Jeremiah protests against God's call that "he is only a youth" or "only a child". This suggests that he was likely well below the accepted age of ministry, which was typically 30.
- Warren Wiersbe makes some good points about other concerns Jeremiah might have had about God's call.
  - Being a priest was predictable. One only had to follow the laws from the Torah.
    - Offer sacrifices in the prescribed way.
    - Examine lepers.
    - Exclude unclean people from the community. Reinstall cleansed people.
    - Conduct official ceremonies.
    - Teach the law.

- Priests were generally respected. They belonged to the tribe of Levi, which gave them their authority.
- Being a prophet was unpredictable.
  - It involved preaching. People often did not want to hear the message.
  - A prophet was often unwelcome and faced harmful threats.
  - Priests were supported from the sacrifices and offerings of the people. Prophets had no guaranteed income.
  - Prophets were not stationary. A priest might travel to Jerusalem for his required service in the Temple, but then he returned home to his family.
  - A prophet had to frequently prove his divine call, particularly when there were other prophets (ordained by God or otherwise) in the country.
  - Prophets did not always know what God wanted them to say until he gave them His Word.
  - Jeremiah 1:7 says, “for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.”
- In his first sermon on Jeremiah, Dr. Frank Barker made these comments about Jeremiah’s call:
  - It was extensive.
    - “See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms” Jeremiah 1:10
    - It speaks of God’s sovereignty.
  - It was destructive.
    - “to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow” Jeremiah 1:10
    - Think about plucking weeds out of a garden. That is exactly what God was calling Jeremiah to do. Idol worship had to be rooted out and destroyed so that men’s hearts and minds would turn back to God.

- It was constructive.
  - “to build and to plant” Jeremiah 1:10
  - God did not intend for his Promised Land and his people’s hearts and minds to lie fallow after evil was rooted out. Per Dr. Barker, “Once we have cleared the ground, we are to build a Kingdom. Build men into temples for the Holy God to dwell in.”
- There are a few other points about Jeremiah’s call to be a prophet.
  - In Jeremiah 1:5, God says “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.”
  - The word “knew” here is the same word used throughout the Old Testament to describe the intimate, sexual act between a husband and a wife.
  - Here, the connotation is not sexual but certainly personal and intimate. It was not a random act on God’s part to call Jeremiah into His service. God “foreknew” Jeremiah.
  - The meanings of Jeremiah’s name, “Yahweh loosens the womb” or “Yahweh exalts” express the intent of God’s planning for Jeremiah and his role in service to God.
  - The call of Jeremiah fulfills Deuteronomy 18:18:
    - I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.
- The 2 visions of Jeremiah 1:11-17 introduce us to some of the poetic language for which the book of Jeremiah is known.
- With the 1<sup>st</sup> vision of the almond branch, we also get a hidden meaning. Anathoth was a center for almond growing then and remains so now. This vision would have resonated with Jeremiah. He would have understood the reference to a coming spring as well as the immediacy of the outcome of words he spoke at God’s direction.
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> vision, God shows Jeremiah a boiling pot, facing away from the north.
- Many of Israel’s enemies came from the north over the centuries: the Syrians, the Philistines, and the Assyrians.

- J. A. Thompson states “the north was a symbol for dark powers often of uncertain origin.”
- However, we only have to look back at the words of the prophet Isaiah to King Hezekiah to understand that the **main** enemy from the north was clearly Babylon.
  - Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD: <sup>17</sup> Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. <sup>18</sup> And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” 2 Kings 20:16-18
- Also, the full scripture was fulfilled during the reign of King Jehoiakim, Josiah’s son. Jehoiakim was a vassal to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon for 3 years before rebelling against him. 2 Kings 24: 2 records what happened next:
  - And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets.
- There is one other point to be made about these 2 visions. We do not know when God gave Jeremiah the visions. However, their placement in Chapter 1 provides an appropriate framework for Jeremiah’s mission, for the purpose of the destruction of Judah at the hand of the Babylonians, and for the nearness of the events to follow.
- An overarching theme throughout Jeremiah is the punishment of Judah for breaking the covenant. Simply, they broke the covenant when they worshipped other gods, and they did not follow the stipulations of the covenant as outlined in Exodus 34:
  - Failed to tear down the altars to other gods
  - Sacrificed to other gods
  - Ate food sacrificed to idols
  - Intermarried with non-believers
  - Failed to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths)
  - Failed to bring their first fruits as offerings to God



- The concluding section of Jeremiah 1 is reminiscent of God's words to Joshua before he led the people into the Promised Land.
  - Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9
  - Jeremiah must have remembered God's words to Joshua and found a measure of comfort in God's words to him also.
  - They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you." Jeremiah 1:19

## Jeremiah

### Lesson 2: Jeremiah 1: 1-19

#### **Jeremiah's Historical Setting (1:1-3)**

1. Like many other prophetic books, Jeremiah begins with a list of kings who reigned during his 40-year ministry. Josiah (640-609 BC) was the last good king of Judah, instituting a number of reforms (2 Kings 23: 1-25). Jeremiah was called in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah's reign (627 BC); according to 2 Chronicles 34: 1-7, what reforms had Josiah begun the year before? Based on Jeremiah 1:13-16, what should we conclude about the effectiveness of these reforms?
  - At age 16, Josiah began to seek the God of David.
  - At age 20, Josiah began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherah poles, and carved and metal idols. The Baal altars and the incense altars were chipped down. He broke into pieces the Asherah poles and carved idols; these he ground into dust and scattered the dust over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the idolatrous priests on their altars. In the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, he did the same. (Note: the latter were in the Northern Kingdom).
  - 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.  
Jeremiah 1:16
  - The people continued to worship other gods and idols, despite Josiah's reforms.

#### **Jeremiah's Call and Message (1:4-16)**

2. God begins his call to Jeremiah by saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (1:5). Why do you think God begins this way? What effect do you think these words would have had on Jeremiah?
  - God's words to Jeremiah demonstrate God's sovereignty, his creative power, his omniscience, his divine plan for humanity, and his understanding of human nature.
  - I think Jeremiah would have been very humbled to know that God had planned for Jeremiah to be consecrated as God's prophet before Jeremiah was even conceived.

- The underlying Hebrew word in verse 5 means “set apart”. It implies that an object or person is to be totally dedicated to God. With this interpretation, Jeremiah has a hint that he will not be a part of the nation to whom he speaks. He will be outside of it, in effect to maintain his consecrated status. He has only one role and that is to speak for God.
3. Jeremiah initially responds to God’s call by protesting, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth” (1:6). Like Moses (Ex. 3:1-4:16) and Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-9) before him, Jeremiah was overwhelmed by God’s call. How does God reassure him (Jer 1:9)?
    - 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.<sup>8</sup> Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.” Jeremiah 1:7-8
    - Jeremiah does not need to be intimidated by his youth or his lack of oratory skills. God will give him the words to say to the people. Wherever Jeremiah was sent by God, God promised to deliver him from any problems or harm he faced.
  4. After reassuring Jeremiah in verses 7-8, “the Lord put out his hand and touched” the prophet’s mouth (v. 9). God did a similar thing when calling the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-7). In Isaiah this act symbolizes God’s cleansing Isaiah of his sin. What does this act symbolize here in Jeremiah?
    - In Jeremiah, the action symbolizes that Jeremiah’s words are God’s holy words. God’s act is personal.
  5. According to Jeremiah 1:10, God calls Jeremiah “to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” Look up how these same pairs are used in 18:7-11; 31:27-30; and 45: 1-4. Based on these passages, what do these phrases mean?
    - If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will **pluck up and break down and destroy it**,<sup>8</sup> and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.<sup>9</sup> And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that **I will build and plant it**,<sup>10</sup> and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.<sup>11</sup> Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the LORD, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’ Jeremiah 18:7-11
    - Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.<sup>28</sup> And it shall

come to pass that as I have watched over them **to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant**, declares the LORD. <sup>29</sup> In those days they shall no longer say: “‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.’” <sup>30</sup> But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. Jeremiah 31:27-30

- The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a book at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: <sup>2</sup> “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: <sup>3</sup> You said, Woe is me! For the LORD has added sorrow to my pain. I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.’” <sup>4</sup> Thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD: Behold, **what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am plucking up**—that is, the whole land. Jeremiah 45:1-4
  - God is prepared to destroy the nation of Judah and other nations for their sins. God is even prepared to do this to the Promised Land of his chosen people and to his chosen people because they have committed such grave sins on a continual basis.
  - These passages point out God’s justice; he must punish sin. These passages also point out God’s mercy in that he will not destroy all his people, nor will he destroy the Promised Land forever.
  - The passages could be summed up with two words: **overthrow and restore.**
6. In 1:11, God shows Jeremiah an almond (Hebrew shaqed) branch, then in verse 12 he tells him, “I am watching over (Hebrew shoqed) my word to perform it”. As the first tree to bud in the spring, the almond tree was said “to watch for spring.” What does the imagery of the almond branch tell us about God’s commitment to his word and to Jeremiah his prophet? How would this reassure Jeremiah?
- God is watching over the words he gives Jeremiah to say. Then God will fulfill these words. The almond bud heralded springtime. Jeremiah’s spoken words from God would be rapidly fulfilled.
7. God shows Jeremiah a second vision, that of a “boiling pot, facing away from the north” (1:13). The boiling pot symbolizes “the tribes of the kingdom of the north” (i.e., Babylon) who will surround the cities of Judah, including Jerusalem (vv. 14-15). Why is God allowing this? What has Judah done to provoke God’s judgment?
- 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. Jeremiah 1:16

- God is going to use the Babylonians to punish Judah for its sins. God's people have broken the covenant.

### **God's Promised Protection of Jeremiah (1:17-19)**

8. God acknowledges that Jeremiah's commission is a difficult one. What four commands does the Lord give Jeremiah (1:17)? What is the meaning of the imagery of verse 18? What is the relationship between God's command to Jeremiah and what God promises to "make" him?
  - 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.  
Jeremiah 1:17
  - 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. Jeremiah 1:18
  - Jeremiah will be wearing in effect a coat of armor which will protect him from the people, the kings, the officials, and the priests of Judah. They will make war on Jeremiah. God will make Jeremiah impregnable, irresistible, and strong. He will need this protection because of the words he delivers for God and for the pending destruction of Judah and its people at the hand of the Babylonians.
  - Note: Verse 17 means "gird your loins"; tuck the hem of your garment into your waistband and get ready to run and/or fight.
9. Jeremiah's commission to speak the words God puts in his mouth will not make him popular. According to 1:18-19, who will oppose Jeremiah? What 2 things does God promise Jeremiah in response?
  - The people, the kings, the officials, and the priests of Judah will oppose Jeremiah.
  - They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you." Jeremiah 1:19

## Personal Implications

### 10. Gospel Glimpses

- Jesus never promised that we would not suffer. Instead, he said that we would face tribulation in the world. He also said that we should hold fast and be ever at peace because He had overcome the world. (John 16:33).
- We are encouraged because, as Christians, we are freed from the power of sin and, through the work of the Holy Spirit within us, we are sinning less. When we die, we will be freed from the presence of sin entirely.
- The penalty for sin is death. Sinful people cannot be in God's presence. Because of Jesus' death on the cross, he took our sin record and gave us his perfect record. We have life eternal in God's presence after our physical death.

### 11. Whole-Bible Connections

- God knew us too:
  - For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.<sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. Romans 8:29-30
  - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,<sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love<sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,<sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:3-6
- We are exiles also:
  - Do not be conformed to this world Romans 12:2
  - For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. 1 Corinthians 3:19
  - You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:4

## 12. Theological Soundings

- The Word of God:
  - It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4
  - For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18
- Idolatry:
  - For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Romans 1:18-23
  - He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. <sup>11</sup> When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? <sup>12</sup> Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep. Ecclesiastes 5:10-12
  - But godliness with contentment is great gain, <sup>7</sup> for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. <sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. <sup>9</sup> But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. 1 Timothy 6:6-10

## 13. Jeremiah 1:1-19 in total

- Jeremiah did not protest about God’s call as much as Moses.
- Jeremiah did not flee from God’s commands as Jonah did.

- Jeremiah had certainly witnessed the destruction of the Northern Kingdom from afar. What fear did he still hold in his heart about the pending destruction of Judah at the hand of the Babylonians? Did he weep for what was to come?