

9103U

GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP - 2002

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

Speaker: Bro. Ron Cowie

Study #1: Take my brethren the prophets for an example

Reading: Jeremiah 1 and James 5

Thanks brother Frank and good afternoon brethren and sisters and our dear young people.

The words for the title of our study on Jeremiah are found as our brother said in James 5. Very well known words for us, but words that have a tremendous amount of import; James said, 'Take my brethren the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and of patience'. He went on to say, 'behold, we count them happy which endure; you have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy'. I want you to notice straight up front, the connection to Job; how that James in his writing connected both Job and the prophets together. Tomorrow morning, God willing, we're going to see exactly why that was! But for now let us take, as James advises us, Jeremiah and the prophets for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. We're going to take Jeremiah and his friends as an example of encouragement of surviving in very difficult times, very depressing times in which Jeremiah lived. He can encourage us, along with his friends as to how we might also survive those times. You know, Jeremiah at the end of his life, was able to see the mercies of Yahweh. He sat there in the midst of the ruins of Jerusalem and said, 'It is of Yahweh's mercies that we are not consumed', and we hope that we might also come to see the end of the Lord in our lives.

The book of Jeremiah and the life of Jeremiah is something quite remarkable in the bible. When you add up the verses that people wrote, Jeremiah is the most prolific writer except for Moses. We know that Moses had to record the history of the world from creation right down to his own death; so Moses wrote 5 books. He also had to give the law that God gave to His people, but apart from Moses, the writings of Jeremiah occupy a most significant part in the scriptures. If we accept the book of Psalms as being a collation of many writers as it is, we actually have more words of Jeremiah than of any other writer besides Moses. When you add the book of Lamentations which are the thoughts of Jeremiah upon his life, his personal insight on the tragic events that swept over the nation, you actually find that we have an incredible amount of information about Jeremiah, that we know more about Jeremiah than any other prophet. We've got his whole life laid out before us, a 40 year ministry given in great detail and an incredible

number of circumstances and struggles that he works through in his writings. It was, b&s and young people, a very incredible life, a life against huge odds, amidst great sufferings, a life that suffered enormous disappointments. But above all it was a courageous life, and I trust by the end of these studies, we might go away with some idea of the courage that Jeremiah showed in very, very difficult circumstances. The courage to take on the apathy of the nation, to take on the vital opposition that he received from prophets and priests and kings, and to courageously speak as James said, 'to speak in the name of the LORD what needed to be said, even though the hearers didn't want to hear it'. We're going to see Jeremiah go through many, many times of sadness and depression, even times that he bitterly resented what God had put him through. You know, here was a man who was to be betrayed by his own family, turned on by his friends, persecuted by his home town, resisted and imprisoned by wicked kings, he was to be called a traitor, a whoremonger, a schemer, a fool, a false prophet, and many other things beside. He was to know great unpopularity, his motives were constantly questioned, he was called a deserter, and yet in the middle of all that, he clung to his God and to God's promises. Yet for all his sufferings, he was able to say as he sat there in the midst of the rubbish and the ruins of Jerusalem, he was able to say those glorious words found in Lamentations 3 verse 22, 'It is of Yahweh's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness'.

That was the end of the life of Jeremiah, to be able to sit there and to say, despite everything that's happened to me, nevertheless, Yahweh's mercies have been with me through all those things!

It's very sad that Jeremiah saw his life as a failure! You see, he set his heart upon reforming the nation, he wanted to turn the nation around and to save them from the destruction. He wanted to prevent the temple from being destroyed, he did not want to see the throne of David overturned, and at the end of his life he thought he was a failure because it all happened, it was all taken away! and the line of the sons of David came to an end! What he didn't realize was that his life was a life of inspiration, he could not save the nation but he did save a remnant and that's what we're going to focus upon is **Jeremiah and his remnant**. I want you to come to the 15th chapter of Jeremiah and verse 11, you see, Jeremiah was constantly saying to God and trying to pray to God for the nation, and God said to him, 'don't pray for this nation, Jeremiah, it's a waste of time; what you have to do is focus upon the few who will listen'. There's quite a lesson in that, b&s, and we're going to see who they were; Jeremiah 15 verse 11 and we'll just take verse 10 for the context, some of the mourning of Jeremiah over the response he got, 'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!' (everybody hates me) I haven't been out there taking usury, and yet they all curse me, why am I so unpopular? Jeremiah is going through one of his low moments here and Yahweh's response in verse 11, 'Jeremiah, I know it's hard, I know they curse you every day, but Jeremiah it shall be well with you and with thy remnant; I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and the time of affliction'. I want you to note God's view of the situation! 'Jeremiah, I have given **you a remnant**; the ones that are flocking around you and who will listen, they're yours, Jeremiah, that's

your remnant; I'm giving them to you!

Who were that remnant? Well, we know who some of them were, they were people like the faithful family of Shaphan, and there were the Rechabites; there was Barak and there was Ezekiel, there was Daniel, Daniel's friends, Ezra, Mordecai, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Gemariah, Gedaliah, and others. There was quite a few of them when you go back, and put the historic records together, you find that many of those that went into captivity, started off as Jeremiah's remnant. God's attitude was, 'Jeremiah, your greatest work is to save that remnant, to inspire them; and this man who thought he was a failure, not only inspired the few in his days but he inspired generations of Christadelphians down through the years. He's going to be very surprised when he gets to the kingdom to find, how many lives he's actually affected by what he went through.

But why does God send prophets? Well, God has a good reason to send prophets, b&s. He talks about the ministry of the prophets; just a couple of verses that you're quite familiar with, God says in Hosea 12 verse 10, He says, 'I have spoken by the prophets, I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by the **ministry** of the prophets'. Now the word 'ministry' there is the word 'yad' (3027) in the Hebrew with is the word for 'hand', by the hand of the prophets. You see, God's mind wants something done and His hand that does it on the earth is the prophets. So He sends the prophets with visions and similitudes that His will might be known in the earth, and His intelligence, God's mind, is expressed through His prophets. Again, in Amos 3, 'Surely Adonai Yahweh will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets'. So the prophets occupy in God's mind, a very important place, and God loves His prophets; when you go through the book of Revelation alone, this is just a few verses, but actually show to us what God has in store, a particular role for His prophets. You know, James said, 'the prophets who have spoken in the name of the LORD' and that is not always a popular thing to do. People don't want to hear the words of God in many cases, and God is very conscious of that! and He says in Revelation 11, 'the time of the dead that they should be judged, Thou shouldest give thy reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name small and great'. Did you ever notice in Revelation 11 the order of the reward? You know, God's view of the resurrection and the judgment process is that #1, that He might reward His prophets, and the saints and all those small and great that fear His name. But it's interesting, isn't it? that He puts right up front the reward for the prophets, because God knew what they were going through and particularly Jeremiah. 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven (we're talking now of the destruction of the great Babylon), and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her', (Revelation 18 verse 20) because all the persecutions of the prophets are going to come back to roost on that system. Revelation 18, 'In her was found the blood of the prophets and of saints', and of course, the persecutions of God's prophets started right back with Jezebel, as she hounded Elijah into dens and caves of the earth. That system is going to go under, and God will avenge the blood of His prophets. It's just interesting to know, isn't it? that when those passages are put together, how much God loved his prophets, those who stand for His righteousness and He hasn't forgotten them.

Then we come down to Jeremiah. I want you to come with me to Hebrews 11, you know, God is not unmindful of the suffering of His servants, and particularly their shame and their rejection. He spoke beautifully of Daniel, 'O Daniel a man greatly beloved, and Jeremiah was a prophet that God very much loved. When we come to Hebrews 11 we know that the writer of Hebrews 11 was giving us a great charter of those who were in the faithful down the centuries; we come down to verse 32 where it says, 'What shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of the prophets'. But in the summary of Hebrews 11, as he sums up all the faithful, he actually devotes one particular verse to Jeremiah. Hebrews 11 verse 36, he's talking about the things that happened to the prophet from verse 32 onwards, all the things that happen, then he says in verse 36, 'And others had a trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments'. I suggest to you this is Jeremiah's verse, every single word in verse 36 applies to Jeremiah. It's not to say other prophets weren't mocked, but only Jeremiah was mocked, scourged and frequently put in prison; in fact, Jeremiah was scourged at least twice that we know of, he was constantly mocked. He said, 'I'm in derision daily, everyone mocketh me', and he was constantly in prison in those last years before the city fell, and I suggest to you that that verse fits Jeremiah like a glove, his miseries and his imprisonments, and particularly that came in the last few years.

I want you to come back to 2 Chronicles 36 and just see how the words of Jeremiah were the words of God, as a testimony against the last kings of Judah. 2 Chronicles 36 verse 11, 'Zedekiah, the last king, was one and twenty years when he began to reign and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem; he did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh his God and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of Yahweh'. Now do you see how the scriptures made that point, Jeremiah was speaking from the mouth of Yahweh and Zedekiah would not humble himself before that man! So there was no remedy for the people, there was no way that they could be saved. **Jeremiah spoke the words of the LORD courageously!**

But Jeremiah also suffered on the personal front. When we come to Jeremiah 16 we find that he was asked to endure a number of things that we would find very difficult. You know, it's one thing to suffer but it's also very hard to suffer alone, and Jeremiah life is a life of great loneliness. You see, he was asked in Jeremiah 16, because of the task that he had to do, in verse 2, 'Thou shalt not take unto thee a wife, nor have sons and daughters in this place'. One of the other reasons for that was that he was to show to the people that it was not a time to be having families because **judgment was impending**. What Jeremiah didn't know when he was told to do that, was that there was 40 years to go, before the city fell! But he was to be a living example of the urgency of the times, he was not to take a wife nor to have a family; that was a great sacrifice that he made! He was also cut off from the normal social life of the nation; verse 5, 'Enter not into the house of mourning', if any of his relatives died in that 40 years he could not mourn for them; neither could he go to the house of feasting in verse 8, so there was a lot of personal sacrifice that Jeremiah had to go through that he might demonstrate the

power of the words of God and so he was cut off from that personal contact.

Then he had to watch the decline and the destruction of the kingdom. Jeremiah lived through the lives of 5 different kings and he watched all of them lose their thrones; the saddest one was the death of Josiah; he saw many of his friends and his supporters go into captivity, and he had the terrible job of standing up in Israel and prophesying the destruction of God's city and God's temple, and that brought upon him, tremendous wrath because the Jew's have this idea, that no matter how bad they got, they were still better than the rest of the Gentiles! As we saw from the attitude of Jonah, the Jews could never understand how that God could bring other pagan nations against them! They always had this idea that the seed of Abraham must survive, and here was Jeremiah getting up and challenging their patriotic spirit by saying, 'it's all going to go, it's all going to be destroyed'. Then to be proved right, was no joy to him, the time of the siege in the last two years of Zedekiah was a terrible time, an enormous loss of life; incredible famine, they ate their own children; a time of siege and disease and pestilence in the city; chaos and misery. Jeremiah lived through all of that and he had to speak the word of the LORD without fear, even though it was not heeded.

There were some positive things about Jeremiah's words because it was not all doom and gloom. We find in the book of Jeremiah great prophecies of restoration, prophecies about the future of Jerusalem, but the most positive thing about the book of Jeremiah, is what we learn from Jeremiah and the remnant. There's no other prophet, there's no other book, in the section of the prophets that gives you so much personal insight into the friends of the prophet as we have in this book. We pray that we may gain strength when we look at those very loyal friends like Baruch, and Abed-melech, and the sons of Shaphan.

Well, let's come back to Jeremiah 1 and pick up the threads of the book right from the start. Now, we gave out to you the charts which contain a number of background things to the book of Jeremiah, but I would really ask you to have a look, particularly if you've got time over the next few days, to sit down and study this suggestive chronology of the book of Jeremiah. You may be aware that the book of Jeremiah is tremendously out of order in the way that the chapters are put together. It's almost like somebody had every chapter on an individual page and dropped the manuscript and then just picked them up, and they were all shuffled into the wrong order. You'll probably notice when you've gone to the book of Jeremiah in your readings, that the chapters are tremendously out of order, and it's very important to be aware of that. Now if anyone's got a wonderful reason why that is so, I'd love to hear it! I can only put it down to the fact, that this is one of the cases where God had deliberately concealed things to stimulate our intellect. God wants us to think and to sort through the way the chapters fit together. Now on this chart that we gave out, we've actually done a bit of work, and it's only a suggestion, and would be happy if anyone can improve on it, but it's suggesting to you the years BC, the kings of Judah, and the years of their reign down the left hand side, the contemporary prophets, what's happening in the nation. Now the book of Jeremiah is very much dependent upon the movement of the nations around about. At this particular time of

history, Israel was sandwiched between the declining power of Syria, the rising power of Babylon and the strength of Egypt, so they were like meat in the sandwich; as Egypt, Syria and Babylon all had their spats among themselves, they kept trampling through the land of Israel. So here was a nation sandwiched between great nations, and you're going to the need to understand what's happening in those big national events because many of the things that happen depend on understanding that history. We then have a suggested chapter order of the chapters of Jeremiah, and I would really recommend that sometime you read the book of Jeremiah in the order we've suggested. You'll find it makes more sequential sense than just reading it as we have it in our hands at the moment. Then the latter part of the chart tells you about what's happening in that chapter and what's happening to Jeremiah and his friends. So that really helps us to understand the chronology of the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah dealt with the last 4 kings of Judah. He had to deal with Josiah, and that wasn't very hard because Josiah was the only godly king in all of the bunch of the kings that he had to deal with. So there was Josiah then there was Jehoahaz for 3 months, Jehoiakim for 11 years, then Jehoiachin for 3 months and Zedekiah for 11 years. The prophecy of Jeremiah extended for 40 years and 6 months, it was a time of probation, a time of testing both for Jeremiah and for the nation. Then after the nation fell and they were taken into captivity, Jeremiah survived another 3 or 4 years living down in Egypt where he was dragged against his will. But those were the years of Jeremiah. Over 40 years, perhaps some 45 years of ministry, from the age of 20 to a man about 65 at the time that he died; 40 years is a long time to be an unpopular prophet. His name means 'whom Yahweh exalts' (3414) and we believe he was called to service around the age of 20 years. You know, Jeremiah was able to say in the book of Lamentations 3 verse 27 to young people, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth', he knew what that meant because at the age of 20, God laid upon him a very heavy yoke to bear. Even though he went through many, many trials and sufferings he could still say, 'it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth'.

He came from a family of priests. When you look at the family of Jeremiah, it was a priestly family of the line of Abiathar, and they lived in a place called Anathoth which is 3 miles north of Jerusalem. Anathoth means for those who are interested 'an answer to prayer' (6068) which is interesting, isn't it? But, the men of Anathoth were not supporters of Jeremiah, in fact, they tried on one occasion to conspire to take his life. Just like the Lord Jesus Christ, 'a prophet is not with honour, except in his own country', and more than once, his own family and his own home town turned against him. But he was of the family of the priests, now that was a very, very useful thing for the things that he had to do; because being the son of the high priest, he was the son of Hilkiah who was the high priest, and having for his grandmother Huldah the prophetess, who was the spiritual guide of the nation before the time of Jeremiah. Jeremiah had contacts in high places. He had connections to key people, he could get access to the temple anytime he wanted; he could get into the palace and front up the king when they needed to be spoken to, and he could work with Josiah on the reformation of cleansing the Land. So in many ways, God had prepared an individual, so here's Jeremiah son of Hilkiah the high priest, there's Jeremiah, his brother has the role as the next high

priest and the line went down to Joshua when they come back from captivity. So Jeremiah was the son of the high priest and brother to the next high priest. So he was very close to the centre of the nation; so God had carefully chosen a person with the right connections. But he still had to respond to the challenge!

Well, there was a very dramatic call in verse 4, 'The word of Yahweh came to me saying', now let's just stop a moment and just carefully read our bibles; how does the word of Yahweh come to a young man?' I mean there were no books for Jeremiah to pick up and read, in fact, it wasn't until many, many years later that they even found the Law; so there were no bibles in the Land, how does the word of Yahweh come? Well, you see, it wasn't a matter of Jeremiah just hearing a voice inside of his head, the word of Yahweh comes when God sends His Yahweh angel to speak to people. Now I want you to notice verse 9 because it says there, 'Then Yahweh put forth His hand and touched my lips', you see, that tells you that the angel was actually there; now God doesn't just send a hand down from the clouds to touch Jeremiah's lips, did He? The Yahweh angel was actually there, and that's not uncommon, you can actually go right through the scriptures and you'll find that often when God spoke to His prophets, that God put words in their mouth; He said in Deuteronomy of the great prophet, 'He would put His words in His mouth'; of Ezekiel, 'son of man, eat this roll; so I opened my mouth and He caused me to eat the roll', and Ezekiel went through a transaction where the word of Yahweh was given to him. In the case of Isaiah, again the angel was there, touched his lips, so you see, there was an active involvement of the Yahweh angel in the call of Jeremiah; the angel was actually there! and on one occasion, touched him to give him the words of Yahweh, and to impart to him the spirit by which he would then, speak the words of God.

So the word of Yahweh came to him and said this, 'Jeremiah, before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee'. Now before he was even born, before he was even conceived, God says, 'Jeremiah, I've had you in mind', I knew thee, I've set you apart; before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, I've set you apart Jeremiah! and I've ordained you a prophet unto the nations'. You find the same things come up again in verse 10, 'See I have this day set thee over the nations', and Rotherham has for 'ordained thee a prophet' in verse 5, Rotherham has 'I have put you **in charge** over the nations'. Now you think, this lad is 20 years of age and an angel appears to him and says, 'Jeremiah, God's formed you before you were born and has put you in charge of the nations'; what an incredible job to do! When we look at men like Jeremiah and Paul, Paul said, 'God who has separated me from my mother's womb and has called me by His grace', and look at the Lord Jesus Christ who, of course, was the greatest example of God preparing a body, and we say, 'well, yes, they were special people', but b&s and young people, God's not limited to just a few, God foresees us, He foresees our children! God marks out for us destinies, like He did for Moses and Paul and Jeremiah, it's an interesting thought to think that God has foreseen, that in some small way everyone of us has been born and brought into the truth, that God might be able to use us. That we might be conformed to the image of His Son, that in the kingdom we might glorify God in some way. It's not unreasonable to think that God has set apart everyone

of us and has given us a chance to respond. Well, for Jeremiah, God had a major role, 'I'll put you in charge over the nations', not just in charge over Judah, over the nations! and during his lifetime, the only nations he got to visit were Egypt in the last 3 or 4 years before he died, and maybe a quick trip up the Euphrates to bury the girdle as described in chapter 13, other than that, he never left the land of Judah.

So in what sense was Jeremiah a prophet to the nations? Well, he wrote against some nations; we have prophecies against Egypt, Moab and Babylon and Ammon. We have chapter 25 which is against **all nations**; he also prophesied about the nations in the future, 'all nations will come up to Jerusalem' says Jeremiah 3. But it's not much really! 'I've set thee in charge of the nations', and in verse 10 it was very specific, **it was to root out, to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, and to build and to plant.** Now many of the prophecies that Jeremiah gave were about pulling down and throwing down and destroying nations, but God said you're also going to build and you're going to plant. So how can that promise come to pass, b&s, for a man who hardly ever left the land of Judah? who certainly built no nations or planted nothing in his time? Well, I suggest to you that Jeremiah's greatest work is yet to come. You know, John, the man who received the Revelation was told in Revelation 10, He said, 'John, you're going to prophesy before peoples and nations and tongues; John, you're work is not finished, in the age to come, you're going to prophesy before peoples, nations and tongues'. I believe that Jeremiah's greatest work is yet to come. In his day, he only saved a remnant, but a man who went through 40 years of no one listening to him, God has a special reward prepared. Jeremiah will go out and he will build and he will plant! and in the kingdom, b&s, everybody will be desperate to hear the words of Jeremiah, and nobody will deride or mock him; he will go out and be in charge of the nations that the word of God might be known and accepted, and I believe God's rewards are always perfectly poetic in their justice. Here was a man whose great misery of his life was that nobody seemed to listen, and God says, 'I'm going to set you over the nations to build and plant, Jeremiah'. He hasn't done that yet, that's the work of Jeremiah in the future!

Then we come to verse 6 and see his response to the call. He says, 'Adonai Yahweh, I cannot speak, I'm only a child!' It's a bit like Solomon, wasn't it? when Solomon was told that he was going to reign over the kingdom of Israel, he said, 'I'm just a child', and spiritual people always express reluctance when they've got great challenges set before them; you know what Moses said, 'I can't do this!' Paul often felt he was the wrong man for the job. Elijah felt the same way, Ezekiel felt the same way, so did Peter. There were many people who felt reluctant to take on the challenges they were given; and we're no exception, we often feel daunted by the magnitude of what God asks us to do to represent Him. We think of ourselves, there's got to be somebody better equipped than me to take this on, why am I left to deal with this particular situation? Jeremiah was only 20 years of age, he was inexperienced! how could he go out and tackle, as it says in verse 18, 'to tackle kings and priests and prophets and the people, how could he do it at that age? I mean, they didn't even come into priestly service until they were 30 years of age and Jeremiah had spent most of his younger days being a shepherd. You come to chapter 17, you know Jeremiah complained to God that he was quite happy looking

after the sheep, 'why didn't you leave me out there minding the sheep? You see, he couldn't go into priestly service until he was 30 years of age, so he spent his younger days being a shepherd like David and Moses and Abel and other of that ilk, Jeremiah 17 verse 16, 'As for me, he says to God, I didn't rush from being a shepherd, (the word 'pastor' there should be a 'shepherd') I didn't rush from being a shepherd to follow you; I didn't want the woeful day, you know that'. You see, this is one of his complaints against God, we're going to see a number of those tomorrow, God willing, where he remonstrates with God ' I was happy being a shepherd, I didn't rush from being a shepherd!

So he said to God back in Chapter 1, 'I'm only a child' and the angel gently reasons with him, 'Jeremiah, don't say, 'I'm a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak'. There's the gentle exhortation, isn't it? that God gives to everyone of us, 'it's My work, I've called you, I know what I'm doing; you might not think that you're qualified for the work that I'm giving you to do'. But on God's work, age is no barrier, and ecclesial life presents numerous opportunities for all of us, and God wants us to respond positively, even though we may feel sometimes we're not cut out for what we have to do. God says, 'I want you to try, I'm calling you to try', and God wants a spirit of willingness with a dose of humility. You know, the words of Isaiah 6 verses 6 to 8, is the correct response, 'here am I, send me'. That wasn't arrogance, but Isaiah had processed it and he said, 'I'm a man of unclean lips, I can't speak the words you want me to speak', and God cleansed his lips with the coal from the altar. Then Isaiah said, 'well, here am I, send me!' I'll give it a go, I'll try.

The call of the truth comes from many directions. God requires that we courageously do our best and not leave it for somebody else. But in verse 8 the angel recognizes the fear that Jeremiah was feeling. 'Be not afraid of their faces', so the angel read what he was thinking, 'I know you're afraid, Jeremiah, of facing up to kings and priests and princes and all these important people, I know it's going to be hard, but I will be with thee to deliver thee, saith Yahweh'. I will not leave you, Jeremiah, and He repeats that in verse 19, 'they will not prevail against you, **for I am with thee**', and when you go back through the bible you find on so many occasions, the Yahweh angel gave that assurance, I am with thee, I will not leave thee; I'm with you, Jeremiah! I've put My words in thy mouth'. You know, b&s, Jeremiah had to learn the lesson that we have to learn and that is that God often chooses people for His work that feel they're not qualified. God doesn't go to the great and the powerful and the mighty, to all the professors of society, to those with great letters after their names. God doesn't bring them to do His work today, does He? You know, the apostle said about your calling, 'you see that not many wise, not many might, not many noble are called', why is it that? because the truth isn't real, the truth is only for simple people? NO, brethren and sisters, the mighty, noble and wise in this world are too high minded for the truth; God can't use them! It's more glory to God to use people who in the world's eyes, are inadequate. God has chosen the foolish things to confound the wise, God has chosen the weak things, God has chosen the base things, the despised things. Why do you think that God sent a 20 year old to confront the kings and the prophets? because their natural response would be, 'well, who's he?

he's only a young kid, he doesn't know 'I and God was challenging them through His servant Jeremiah, that no flesh should glory in His presence. Remember the apostle Paul, you know, Paul kept wondering why he kept falling down to this dreadful sickness that he kept collapsing while he was trying to do the work of God, and 3 times he prayed to God, 'why can't I be healthy, why can't I be like Apollos and stand up there and powerfully exhort and confound the Jews? why can't I do that? why is my bodily presence weak? God said, 'Paul, don't pray for it to be taken away, My strength is being shown in you!' When you collapse through physical weakness and you cry on the way back to the rest room, that's when My power is seen, Paul. Not in your natural ability!' So you see, God chooses people because of what He can make them and how He can show His power in them. It means we have to rise to the occasion, we have to do things for which we are not naturally gifted to do. Take on jobs that seem too big for us, God does that and He will not leave us in the process, 'I will be with thee, to deliver thee', saith Yahweh. Then in verse 9, out comes the hand from the Yahweh angel, and he touched his mouth, and said, 'I'll put My words in thy mouth'. There was the receiving of the spirit of the words of Yahweh to Jeremiah, 'I've set you over the nations, to root out, to pull down, to destroy, to throw down, to build and to plant'.

Now his commission was finished off with two signs, two visions. Verse 11, the first one goes through verses 11 and 12; it's what we call the **vision of the almond rod**. 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' so the angel now shows Jeremiah a vision. 'What is it that you see? I see the rod of an almond tree!' Now the almond tree is the first flowering tree, it's always the herald that winter is starting to come to an end and that spring is not far away. You understand it down here in the southern vales because you have all these almond tours that come down to look at the lovely almond blossom that starts in July; before any of the other trees come into blossom, the almond is in blossom! So the almond tree was called by the Jews '**the awakening tree**' or the 'hasty tree', it was always the first tree to blossom, it was the hasty tree. Now that's important, the other thing that the almond is used for in the bible is quite significant; we all know that the almond rod that budded, was the confirmation of God's selection of His spokesman. You know, when Aaron was challenged by those who said, 'how come God only speaks through you and through Moses?' and Aaron's rod was the proof of God's selection against other false claims, and that's Numbers 17 verses 2 and 3. Jeremiah, you're going to be against false prophets; Jeremiah you're going to constantly having the problem of people trying to listen to you and to the false prophets, and not knowing who to believe; Jeremiah, I'm telling you, you're My almond rod, you're the one through whom I speak.

The other place where almonds are mentioned is in the construction of the lampstand. You'll remember that in the lampstand were the knops that looked like almonds, and again, connected with the word of God was the almond tree. Putting all that together, Jeremiah's being told by God, 'Jeremiah, you're my **appointed spokesman and you're going to speak My words**'. So I see the rod of an almond tree, but the main lesson, Jeremiah, is this, 'Then said Yahweh unto me, you have well seen, for I will hasten My word to perform it'. Now the word 'hasten' there and the word 'almond' in verse 11, are

from the same root word, the word 'shaqad' (8245) which means 'a hastening or a quickening'; so I see a hastening tree, yes, Jeremiah, I will hasten My word to perform it. My word is inexorable, Jeremiah! It will come to pass quickly and surely. Now b&s, there's a great lesson here in how differently God sees things to what we do! I guess when Jeremiah went out and courageously started to speak the words of God, he's thinking that God will hasten His word. Do you know, **not one single prophecy of Jeremiah had its fulfilment for 22 years**. It was 22 years before any word of Jeremiah came to pass! how would you feel if you were Jeremiah? You know, you were told that I will hasten My word; from God's point of view the 40 years in which Jeremiah prophesied was a hastening towards destruction because of the sins of his people. For Jeremiah, the 40 years seemed like an eternity, and for 22 years nothing happened, then in the last 18 years it all happened so quickly. What God was saying to Jeremiah was, 'I'm going to give them 40 years, Jeremiah, to repent and for a remnant to be saved

Every day they laugh at me and say, 'where's the word of Yahweh, Jeremiah, come on, let's see something happen?' and they mocked him mercilessly because nothing happened. He was made to look ridiculous! You see, when Jeremiah started to prophecy, it was a time of prosperity, it was the days of Josiah. The Assyrians were in decline, there were no international threats on the horizon and here's Jeremiah saying, 'we're going to be carried into captivity; the temple's going to be destroyed; the city's going to go into siege! They laughed at him and said to him, 'Jeremiah, that's ridiculous! There's no security threats in our days; and b&s, we know that experience, don't we? You know, back in the 80's we could go to lectures on 'The threat of Russia to the Middle East', and get 30 to 40 friends to come along, because everybody could see that Russia was a great threat to world security. But today, no one wants to hear our Ezekiel 38 lectures, people smile when we say that Russia is the nation that you've got to keep your eyes on, because today Russia is almost a nothing power in the earth. Those are the years that are hard to say, the word of Yahweh is very clear, but it's like a sleeping almond tree, it will suddenly spring to life; it was the same in Jeremiah's life, for 22 years after he started preaching, all of a sudden Babylon came from nowhere and besieged the city and everybody's looking for Jeremiah. Jeremiah, tell us, what does this mean? what's going to happen to us? But it was too late by then! Jeremiah was even told, 'don't even pray for them now, Jeremiah, they didn't listen in that 22 years, don't even pray for them now, I don't want to hear the prayers, because they didn't listen in the good times!' So let's take courage, b&s, don't be deterred by the fact that current events don't always go to exactly what they think they ought; let's hold fast to the things that we surely believe, because in the end, God will hasten it in His time.

Well, the second sign was the **boiling pot**. 'What do you see? verse 13,(the second vision was a cauldron, we would say), a seething pot and the face thereof (as the margin says) is from the north. Verse 14 where it says, 'it shall break forth upon the inhabitants', again the margin 'it shall be opened from the north'; and you see, what Jeremiah was shown was this great boiling cauldron in the north of the Land, and God was going to tip that across the Land, and the hot boiling water would flood the land of

Judah. That's what he was shown well, why? Why would it happen, b&s, why would that judgment come? Well, look at verse 15, 'I will call all the families of the north, says Yahweh, they shall come to everyone his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem'. You know, it's fantastic! when you go to the record of when the Babylonians come down, it's got there compare chapter 39 verse 3 in your margin) it actually says the Babylonians when they broke through the first wall, they set all their thrones against the last resistance of the nation, and all the great men of Babylon came down and set up their thrones just before the city fell. God's prophecy was accurate, now why did God do that? Well, we need to go to Jeremiah 15 verse 4.

It tells us there why God had to take the nation away! Jeremiah 15 verse 4, I'm going to say something about Manasseh later on tonight, but I want you to notice here, when Jeremiah had been trying to pray for this people; God said, I don't care if you had Moses and Samuel here, in verse 1, I'm not going to change My mind!' Verse 4, 'I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem'. So God's judgment was inescapable, the damage that Manasseh had done was irreparable. Well, what had Manasseh done? Well, Manasseh reigned for 55 years, he did incredible spiritual damage to that nation; not only did he ingrain idolatry, he took away the bible! His greatest sin was to get rid of every single copy of the Law out of the nation, to get rid of every teaching priest that he could get his hands on, and Manasseh obliterated spiritual thinking from Judah. You know, when Josiah found the scroll, there was an incredible joy and interest to read the bible for the first time in 50 to 60 years. You imagine the state of our ecclesias, b&s, if we had no bible class for 60 years? No other word from the word of God than from memory, and Manasseh, b&s, is responsible for the spiritual and probably the eternal death of millions of people; he took away spiritual thinking from Israel, and Jeremiah, 'don't pray for them because the damage is irreparable because of Manasseh'. He polluted the house of God, he burnt children in Gehenna, he worshipped the host of heaven and he lost the word to Judah for over 50 years. God said, that's why they're going to be taken away.

So back in chapter 1, we find that the sins of Judah were beyond redemption. Verse 16, 'I will utter My judgments against them concerning their wickedness, who have forsaken Me'. The sins of Judah, when you go through and work out what the worst sins were, these are what they were: spiritual ignorance (Judah-Manasseh's reign), a total change of religion under the surface (they were still worshipping God on the surface but underneath their hearts were somewhere else), apathy and refusal to hearken (they did not listen to what Jeremiah had to say) they loved to hear the false prophets predicting peace. So they were very much in tune with prophecies that said, 'there's no judgment coming, you've got plenty of time! (the false prophets were saying, peace, peace and they loved to hear that), they didn't want to hear the message of judgment); wickedness was supported, even imaginations were rampant; the forsaking of Yahweh the foundation of living water. You know, God said, 'Jeremiah, it's not so bad that they worship idols, what is really bad, Jeremiah, is that they worship idols instead of Me! they've forsaken the living waters. The worship of the queen of heaven was ingrained

through the nation, and that was the basis of women's liberation. You know, you read for yourself sometime Jeremiah 44 and you will see what the worship of the queen of heaven had done to those women. When they got down to Egypt, the women came to Jeremiah and said, 'you're the cause of the problem, if you'd listen to us women, this wouldn't have happened!' It's only when we stop worshipping the queen of heaven, Jeremiah, that we got into this trouble'. There was the foundation of women's liberation, right back in the book of Jeremiah, and the persecution of God's prophets; and because of all of those things God said I will take them away. The boiling part would come from the north because of the sins of the nations.

Well, let's look at the closing exhortation that the Yahweh-angel gives to Jeremiah. Jeremiah 1 verse 17, 'Therefore, gird up thy loins, Jeremiah, arise and speak unto them all that I command thee: **be not dismayed at their faces**'. We know what girding up the loins does, it's actually preparing for action! It's getting ready to go out and take on a task. Don't be afraid, Jeremiah, don't be intimidated! Then he had to go out and stand in the gates of the temple and he had to call them, idolaters, sodomites, thieves, hypocrites, hard-hearted and they were his own people that he loved. They were the prophets, they were the princes and the priests that he respected, and God said, you go down and stand at the gate of that temple and you call them hypocrites, you call them thieves and sodomites, you tell it as it is, Jeremiah, and they won't like it! Keep going and be courageous; **'lest I confound thee before them'**. Now the word 'dismay' and the word 'confound' are the same word in the Hebrew (2865); Jeremiah, if you don't make a courageous stand, if you let them confuse you and humiliate you, then I'll let you be humiliated, Jeremiah. There was a prophet that we read of in Jeremiah 26, who spoke the words of Yahweh, and when he was put under pressure by Jehoiakim, he ran down to Egypt in fear, and God let him be destroyed, and he was a friend of Jeremiah; his name is Urijah. You see, the message he'd been preaching was the same as Jeremiah, 'don't go to Egypt, don't go to Egypt, don't go to Egypt, and don't trust in Egypt, and when his own life was on the line, he ran down to Egypt. God let him go down there and then dragged him back, they killed him and put him in the grave with the common people. He was humiliated and confounded because he cracked under pressure! 'Jeremiah, you can't crack under pressure. If you're dismayed or if you crack then I will break you, Jeremiah'. This was not an easy task! 'Jeremiah, you're going to be under siege'.

Verse 18, 'I've made you a defended city', and you're going to be like a city under siege, they're going to be coming against you in all directions, throwing in missiles, attacking you from all sides. You're going to be under siege, a defended city, and iron pillar, a brazen wall against the whole land. 'The kings, the princes and the priests, everybody's going to be against you, Jeremiah. They'll fight against you, but Jeremiah, they will not prevail! you be courageous and you'll survive because **I am with you**'. God says to us, b&s, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; that doesn't mean that life will be always easy, it means that God will see us through to the end! There's a very beautiful verse in the Apocalypse that talks about this courageous spirit that's prepared to get up and to say what needs to be said, to speak the words of God without fear or favour; to expound

the same prophecies despite what current events might look like! God loves that spirit, b&s, and as much as he encouraged Jeremiah to be courageous, He also encourages us! Revelation 19 verse 10, 'I sat at his feet to worship him (that's John before the angel) and he said to me, see that you do it not. For I am thy fellow servant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus (the courageous standing up and saying that I know the Lord Jesus Christ, that we believe the words of God, that we believe the warnings of the Lord Jesus Christ) 'the courageous testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ **is the spirit of prophecy**'. Have you ever thought what those words mean, b&s? The same spirit that Jeremiah was being asked to show, now has to be shown in a testimony for Christ. The same courage to stand up and to be counted for the Lord Jesus Christ is the spirit of prophecy! You see, the angel says to John, 'Look, I'm just one of your brethren; we're all brethren, John. The angels love people like you, and we love the prophets because you've got one thing in common, **you stand for the words of God**; whether it's the voice of prophecy or the testimony of Jesus, it's the same spirit! it's the same attitude of courage, of loyalty to God against all the circumstances. If you show that courage, b&s and young people, in our day, to stand for the testimony of Jesus and to speak the words of God courageously, God says, 'I am with you! I will care for you and you and the remnant that listen will survive the affliction which is coming upon this Land.

Jeremiah did survive! All the kings came and went, the false prophets went into captivity or died, the city fell, the temple was burned and Jeremiah sat in the ruins of the city and broke his heart for all of those that had gone before, but he and his friends were alive. As God had promised, it shall be well with thee and with thy remnant, Jeremiah.

Well, b&s, let's conclude in Lamentations 3, let's conclude as he sat there in the ruins of Jerusalem and think about a 40 year life in which there was so much suffering and so much affliction and so much a need for patience. Here's what Jeremiah learnt from that experience, Lamentations 3 verse 22, 'It is of Yahweh's mercies that we're not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. Yahweh is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. Yahweh is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Yahweh'. B&S, let us learn to have the courageous spirit of Jeremiah, for the testimony of Jesus today is the spirit of prophecy.