

The prophecy of Jeremiah

Part 1

Speaker	George Muller
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[00:00:01] Could we turn to God's Word and read from the book of Jeremiah?

The book of Jeremiah, read in the 14th chapter of the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah chapter 14.

The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the death, Judah mourns, and the gates thereof languish, they are blackened to the ground, and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.

Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters, they came to the pits and found [00:01:04] no water, they returned with their vessels empty, they were ashamed and confounded and covered their heads, because the ground is chapped, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads, yea the hind also carved in the field and forsook it, because there was no grass, and the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons, their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.

O Lord, thine iniquities testify against us?

Do thou it for thy name's sake, for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against thee. O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as [00:02:02] a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name, leave us not.

Thus saith the Lord unto his people, thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord does not accept them, he will now remember their iniquity and visit their sins.

Then saith the Lord unto me, pray not for these people, for their good, when they fast I will not hear their cry, and when they offer burnt offering and oblation, I will not accept them, but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. [00:03:04] Then said I, O Lord God, behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.

Then the Lord said unto me, the prophets prophesy lies in my name, I send them not, neither have I

commanded them, neither spake unto them, they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of note, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I send them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land, by sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword, they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor [00:04:06] their sons, nor their daughters, for I will pour their wickedness upon them. Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them, Let my knives run down the tears, night and day, and let them not cease, for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great rage, with a very grievous blow.

If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with a sword, and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine, yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.

Hast thou utterly rejected Judah?

Hast thy soul loathed Zion?

Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? We look for peace, and there is no good, and for the time of healing, and behold, trouble.

[00:05:06] We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against thee.

Do not abhor us for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory, remember, break not thy covenant with us.

Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain, or can the heavens give showers?

Art not thou he, O Lord, our God?

Therefore will we wait upon thee, for thou hast made all these things.

Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward these people, cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. It shall come to pass, if they stand to thee, whither shall we go forth? Then thou shalt tell them, Thus says the Lord, Such are for death, to death.

[00:06:06] Such are for the sword, to the sword. Such are for the famine, to the famine. And such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, says the Lord, the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.

Then, verse ten, Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth.

I have neither land on Israel, nor men have land to me on Israel, yet every word, yet every one of them does curse me.

[00:07:01] The Lord said, Very late shall be well with thy remnant. Very late I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, in the time of affliction.

Verse fourteen, And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not, for a fire is kindled in mine anger which shall burn upon you. O Lord, thou knowest, remember me, and visit me, and revenge me over persecutors.

Take me not away in thy long-suffering.

Know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me a joy and rejoicing of mine heart, for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

[00:08:03] I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced. I sat alone because of thy hand, for thou hast filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed? Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a lark, and as waters that fail?

Therefore, thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me. And if thou take forth the precious from the vial, thou shalt be as my mouth. Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.

And I will make thee unto these people a fenced brazen wall, and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, to save thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord.
[00:09:05] And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Chapters that we don't read very often, and yet chapters which speak to us.

They take us to a long distant past, and yet they are still very present and worthy of consideration today.

Jeremiah was a prophet.

He came from a family of the priesthood.

[00:10:07] We find that in the first chapter. He came from that small village called Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin. A little village about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. A little village in which lived, in earlier days, such a great priest as Abiathar, in the days of David and Solomon.

Jeremiah was a young man.

His father, we are told, was Hilkiah.

[00:11:01] We do not know if this Hilkiah was the same as the one mentioned at the end of the book of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, who, in the days of King Josiah, with the scribe Shaphan, discovered in the house of the Lord the book of the law of the Lord. And you recall that when that book was found, it

brought about a remarkable change in the whole land of Judah.

A remarkable change, because when those two, Hilkiah and Shaphan the scribe, read the books of the law of the Lord, they were so struck by it, by the contents of it, [00:12:02] that they straight away took it to the king. And King Josiah read from that book. And he read of the judgments that were going to come upon his people. Why? Because they had forsaken God, their God.

The God who had brought them out of Egypt. The God who wanted to be their God. And they should be his people.

And so much struck was King Josiah.

That he brought about a complete change in what was going on in the land in those days. He was the one who, first of all, cleared out the house of the Lord from everything that was against God in it.

[00:13:03] All the idols which were in the land had to be destroyed. The grove that was in the house of God had to be moved out and smashed to pieces.

And all those high places where the kings before him and the whole people had been burning incense on to the gods, to the moon, to the gods of the nations, to the moon and to the sun. These high places had to be destroyed. And there was a complete change among the people of God because the king had found that book of the law of God.

How long did it last?

Not long.

Just as long as that godly king lived. He reigned 31 years, a young man.

[00:14:03] And God gave him a wonderful promise. Because thy heart has been tender and because thou hast returned and taken to heart all the judgments which I have threatened you with if you turn away from me, because thy heart has been tender, then I will remove thee before the judgments come.

Josiah was taken away.

Jeremiah was one of those prophets who prophesied in the days of king Josiah. He prophesied 18 years through the end of that reign.

It was an easy time, shall we say, for prophet Jeremiah.

It was an easy time because the king was on his side. [00:15:02] And the people had turned back to God.

And the worship had been re-established in the temple. And you recall the Passover was celebrated in those days of king Josiah. There was a real revival among the people of Judah.

But soon the people went back to other gods.

They abandoned the Lord their God, turned away from him and worshipped the gods of the nations.

And so God was obliged to bring about those judgments that he had promised. But those judgments that he had promised would fall upon his people if they had turned away from him. And it was given to Jeremiah, a young man, [00:16:05] timid, weak, to proclaim God's message to his people.

He was called in a remarkable way.

What a memorable day was that in the life of Jeremiah when God called him.

Chapter 1 will tell us, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee. And before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee. And I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. What a wonderful call this was for this young man. Not a call so startling as the one that prophet Isaiah had had some 150 years before.

[00:17:01] You recall that wonderful vision that the prophet Isaiah had had when he was in the temple. And he saw that vision and saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lofty and the seraphims were flying about and crying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. And you remember how that one of the seraphims came to Isaiah the prophet, found in the presence of the Lord what were his words. He had said, Woe unto me, woe unto me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Woe unto me. But then the seraphim had come and had taken a life call from the altar where the sacrifice had taken place and had touched his lips. And then Isaiah had heard the call, Whom shall we send?

[00:18:05] And his reply had been, Here am I, send me.

Jeremiah didn't have that same experience, but he heard the word of the Lord which said to him, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee. We have here, have we not, the full knowledge and the election of God. How wonderful it is for us each one to know for a truth what the apostle Paul had to say when he wrote to the Ephesians and said, Chosen of God before the foundation of the world.

Elect of God. This is what you and I, dear friends, are who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:19:01] Before the world was, we were chosen of God.

What an immense blessing this is to each one of us, to know it and to rejoice in it.

And before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, set apart. This was for the prophet. He had been set aside by God that he might be his mouthpiece to his people. Set apart.

You and I, who know the Lord Jesus Christ, have also this wonderful portion. We have been set apart by God in order that we might be his people. And also in order that we might be each one of us [00:20:01] of use to him in the while that he leaves us down here. Set apart to be a witness, a testimony for him.

Each one of us, we have this calling.

It's a heavenly calling. And it is a heavenly separation.

Set apart for God that we might be his and that we might be of use to him. And I ordain thee a prophet unto the nations.

I've given thee to be a prophet to the nations. To each one of us devolves a service which God has prepared for us. Those good works in which he wants us to walk which he has prepared that we might walk in them [00:21:03] in order that we might glorify him in this scene. Yes, this is the great privileges that are ours who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our savior and God as our father. Foreknown, elected, set apart and then the prophet is sent.

There is a definite calling for him to do service for the Lord.

Happy are those who know all these things and happy are those who answer the call of God when he calls. Jeremiah finds objections to this call.

He wasn't the first.

You remember how Moses of old [00:22:03] had found all sorts of excuses when God called him to lead his people out of Egypt? How will they believe in me? How will they know that I am sent? Gideon in days of old also had found exactly the same excuses, had he not? He was the least in his father's house.

He had no power whatsoever.

Jeremiah says here, but look, I am a child.

Behold, I cannot speak for I am a child.

But the Lord said unto me, say not I am a child for thou shalt go to all that I send thee and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak.

Called of God, [00:23:03] sent of God, was a direct message for his people.

This was what Jeremiah was called out for.

What a message was it?

It was a terrible message.

We find that in the same first chapter of the book of Jeremiah. Behold, I have put thy words, my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day sent thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, to pull down, to destroy, to throw down. His message was to be a message of destruction. He was not bringing a message of peace, a message of encouragement to those people of God. [00:24:02] Why not? We've read in that 14th and that 15th chapter why God could not send to them a message that was a message of peace, of comfort and of encouragement. And throughout this book of Jeremiah we find God finding fault with his people, telling them where they have gone wrong, telling them, like in this first chapter, that they have done two wrongs. They have turned away from me, the source of living waters, and they have hewn for themselves systems which are creviced, which hold not water. Two wrong things those people had done. They had turned from their God to worship other

gods. And they had turned to waters that could not satisfy.

[00:25:03] What a terrible message was that message that Jeremiah had to take. And how often the Lord has to rebuke us. We, his people, to rebuke us because we are not very different from what that people was, from what those people were. How often God has to send us a message to call us back to himself, for in our hearts we are not better than they were. Further in the book of Jeremiah we find that the heart of man is incurable. We are just as bad as they were. And how easily we turn away from the God whom we know. The God who has saved us. The God who has brought us to himself. The God who has taken away our iniquity and washed all our sins [00:26:02] in the precious blood of his well-beloved Son. The God who has made us his own. How easily we turn away from him and find our feet in the pathway of a world which has nothing to do with God and wants nothing to do with him. And so we need, do we not, such prophets as Jeremiah to bring the heart of the people back to God.

His message was a message that he proclaimed throughout his life. Over 40 years was that same message proclaimed.

Oh, it wasn't a message in favor of the people. As we read here, it was a message against the people. [00:27:02] Against the king, against the princes, against the people. But, though it was a message calling for impending doom and terrible judgments, yet in the midst of it all, there are at times in this book of Jeremiah some wonderful verses. The heart of God is laid open as he proclaims the love that he has toward his people.

The heart of God is ever turned toward those whom he loves.

Whatever our way, our weakness, erring, turning away from God, [00:28:01] the heart of love is ever towards his own. If we look at the second chapter, we find in that wonderful chapter what the Lord has to say, what God has to say about, I think we may read it in the second chapter, the second chapter of the book of Jeremiah, verse 2. Thus says the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruit of his increase. God remembers those first movements of a heart delivered from the power of Egypt, delivered through the Red Sea, [00:29:02] free on the other side. Those first movements of love and affection to a God who had freedom from a terrible oppressor. Oh yes, we love to read that song that was sung on the other side of the Red Sea. How it fits with our own feelings. And yet, as we come to the voice of God to the assembly in Ephesus, you remember what God has to say, thou hast left thy first love. That warmth of affection that marked the children of Israel on the other side of the Red Sea, that marked the early believers, that wonderful love which God so appreciated, the love of thine espousals, [00:30:02] when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. That freshness of affection. Have we lost it?

Oh, to still be in that love that we knew on that day when we found the Lord. Let us go back, dear friends, to that day when he revealed himself to our hearts and he was all to us and we were all to him. We've lost that, have we not? We've left it.

It's gone from us and yet he sends his message to us so that we might be rekindled in order that we might know more of him, in order that we might love him and serve him better. Now, to encourage Jeremiah [00:31:03] in this pathway in which God was sending him, he shows him three things. In that

first chapter, first of all, he shows unto him a branch of almond, a rod of almond, of an almond tree.

The tree that blossoms when the winter is at its worst. The tree which watches even during the winter. It's God who watches over his word. We find in that tree the power of life.

The power that we need for our Christian life. In the midst of a scene which is dreary and sad, there is the power that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [00:32:02] The power that was in him by which he rose from among the dead. The power of life which is in you and me. Who know the Lord Jesus Christ. It is there.

So that we might be blossoming for him. Just like that rod of Aaron blossomed in a night and brought forth fruit. Yes, the Lord is looking for fruit and blossoms from our lives. Are we answering to what he is expecting? Are we bringing forth any fruit for him? The Lord tells us in John 15 the secret of fruit bearing. Keeping close to him.

Remaining in him.

Living in him.

Or that we might know more of this. [00:33:02] Then after that first vision the God shows to Jeremiah a seething pot.

A pot that was full of boiling water. A pot which is turned to the North. And we find that that pot speaks of judgment. Coming from the North.

From the King of the North. From Syria. From Babylon. Judgments that were going to be poured out upon the land and the people. And as sure as that as sure as Jeremiah saw that seething pot as sure the judgment would be coming. And so Jeremiah could speak the word of God and be sure that what he said would take place. I have made thee [00:34:02] this day a defense sitting an iron pillar and brazen walls. To prevent against him. Now with those assurances Jeremiah could go forward to deliver his message. It was a message which was difficult for a young man to deliver. Timid as he was he had to proclaim it loud and far so that all could hear. And as we read this book of Jeremiah there are two places where the prophet has to go. First of all he has to go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem. The whole of the inhabitants of Jerusalem have to hear what God has to say. Then we find him in chapter 7 he has to shout in the gate of the Lord's house. [00:35:02] And then we find him inside and he has to shout in the court of the Lord's house. It's all got to be public and he's got to hear it. But the resources are in God they are not in Jeremiah they are not in man.

The fourth place he has to go to is go and stand in the gate of the children of thy people. Yes his voice must be heard so that there is no excuse whatsoever. In the midst of all the judgments that Jeremiah is going to predict to foretell there is always and this is what amazes one as one reads the book of Jeremiah there is always the grace of God [00:36:02] that shines.

The love of God is ever towards his people. He says in many places yet there will be a remnant yet if you return unto me I will return unto you. Oh yes there is grace, there is a way out. If there is a way of death there is a way of life. And you and I dear friends can know something of that wonderful life. Listen of a life of service for God.

If only we hearken and obey. This was the message that Jeremiah had to tell over and over again.

Hearken, listen, obey.

And how often God has to say [00:37:02] but ye would not.

Ye would not obey.

The word of God is in our hands. What do we make of it?

Do we listen to God's message? Do we act according to that message? Instead of doing our own will do we do his will?

Or that we might be more in his hands in order to accomplish his will. The glorious example of the Lord Jesus Christ ever comes before us.

In those terrible hours of his anguish he could say in the garden not my will but thine be done. Or that we might know more of this.

How he shines before our hearts. The Lamb of God [00:38:02] ready to give his life for you and me obedient unto death that the death of the cross. May the Lord grant that we may know something more of this obedience and of bowing to the will of God that we might receive the blessing. The message of Jeremiah was to all the people and as we read it through as we read the book through how often we shall find this repetition of doom judgment to come but I love to repeat it grace if there is a return. The people had to listen to those messages [00:39:02] but they would not.

To act living acts so that they might perhaps understand what he was doing and take it to heart.

You remember in one of the chapters God tells him to take a linen girdle and to put it around him and not to wash it to keep it on him the girdle was that which the priests had to wear it was part of their garments and that linen girdle is placed near the heart God telling his people and God telling us how much his heart is ever toward us and then the prophet is told [00:40:02] to take that linen girdle and go and hide it near Euphrates now that was a journey of about 140 miles he had to go and take it and hide it and the prophet obeyed he obeyed the voice of God and then after a little while he had to go back and fetch it and when he found it it was all rotten away it was of no use to him the message then to the people was that as they were they were of no use to God we have in the scriptures many examples of people who were of no use to God there was a time when Onesimus was of no use to his master but then the apostle Paul had to say [00:41:01] he'll be of great use to me and the apostle Paul tells us in his first episode to Timothy he tells us how we can be a vessel fit for the master's use how can we then be fit for the master's use the word of God has to dwell in our hearts first we have to separate ourselves from all that is not according to God Jeremiah had to do the same we read in that wonderful chapter 14 and 15 we read that were thy words found I did eat it bears reading again that verse 16 of chapter 15 [00:42:01] thy words were found and I did eat them and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart what do we do with the word of God is the word of God so much used by us that we know it that we eat it if it is the Him but then there is the other Jeremiah is called upon to separate himself in that same chapter if thou take forth the precious from the vial thou shalt be as my mouth we have to know something about that too have we not in a world which we are foreign to God [00:43:02] in which God finds nothing at all those who want to shine for Him have to be

separated separated from evil separated from those which are vessels to dishonor how little we know of separation in our hearts, in our own lives how easily the world gets in so the Lord calls us to separate ourselves for Him for Him and if that is the purpose, if that is our goal there shall be blessing and we shall be of use to Him vessels to honor fit for the Master's use Jeremiah also had to go out and visit the potter's house he had to go down to the potter's house [00:44:02] and see how the potter was doing his work and as he was there the vessel which the potter was making was marred in his hands no use at all and so he started to make a new vessel God telling Jeremiah a message to pass on to his people how God could make a new view so that there might be a vessel for Him a vessel in the hands of the potter you and I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ the Apostle says of us that we are a new creation a new man a second pot [00:45:01] had to be made man has dishonored God and so God had to bring in a new man and this was his man the first man, the man Christ Jesus the second man he brought him in and what delight he was to his heart as he walked the pathways of earth well let us look and look again at the wonderful path of our blessed Lord how that in it he glorified God thou art my son in whom I am well pleased and so you and I very feebly were called upon to be like unto Him [00:46:04] a vessel which God will make which God can use a third life example was that Jeremiah had to go and buy an earthen bottle and when he had bought it he had to break it God telling his people to Jeremiah that this is what he was going to do with them since they would not listen since they would not return and so the messages go through and yet the heart of the people is not affected we have in Jeremiah a disappointed prophet we read some of the feelings of his heart how he yearned for those people how he would have loved to guide them in the path of the Lord [00:47:03] how he would have done everything to turn them away from their own will, from their own path to the old path that God might find pleasure in doing but all through and all along there is not the slightest response Jeremiah is an isolated voice a voice in the wilderness nobody listens to him or if they listen to him then they turn against him and you know of all his sad experiences how he was persecuted oh yes, Jeremiah knew what persecution was how they spoke against him and then how they as they listened to his voices to his voice and to his words how they would say he is worthy of death [00:48:04] and he is put in the stocks the whole afternoon and the whole night Jeremiah was to suffer there in the stocks and people came and laughed at him oh how he would have liked to give up ready to give up but no there in the midst of his sorrows and sufferings God comes and there is a light from heaven and he takes courage you remember how he was thrown into the cabin in the inner prison you remember how he was thrown into that pit where there was no standing just like the Lord in that pit where there was a lot of Mar and he sank into it [00:49:01] and only through the goodness of God and through the kindness of Ibn Malik was Jeremiah delivered God will always deliver his servant he had promised him that he would deliver thee but right through his life right to the end if there were moments of discouragement and they came into his life and they do come in our lives if there are moments of discouragement let us look up just as Jeremiah did in the midst of his sufferings God came in in the midst of all our troubles and difficulties God will come in there is always a way of issue with God which he has prepared for those who trust in him [00:50:03] so Jeremiah went through his life and right to the end even as the people were about to be taken away into captivity he still delivered the same message and he goes with them into captivity he doesn't go really to Babylon but his heart is with them he sends message to them from Jerusalem and then when the remnant goes down into Egypt he goes down with them and at the end of his life there is a message of hope we find that in the book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah everything has failed the king and all the people [00:51:02] have been taken away into captivity three times the vessels of the house of God have been taken away to Babylon everything has failed but the compassions of God will not they are on you every morning and there in the midst of those Lamentations of Jeremiah there is a message of hope and Jeremiah trusted God and he is looking forward to the moment when God will bring back his people to Jerusalem away from Babylon and you and I get friends in the midst of the gloomy scene all

around us we have a message of hope fixing the eye on Jesus the author and finisher of faith [00:52:02] what do we look for? an improvement down here a revival God can produce it and we mustn't cease to pray for it but in the end at the end of the journey there is for the church there is for the assembly there is for you and me the Father's heart the Lord is coming this is the ray of hope the morning star has already risen are we looking for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? are we waiting for him? are we of those who watch for his return day by day moment by moment [00:53:02] there is a glorious moment coming for you and me when Jesus returns for you Father I will be with me where I am all glorious rest for those who are the children of God are we enjoying it already in our heart? in advance? is that our expectation? may the Lord know that it may be so and that once we are waiting for the moment of his return we may be found here as those who serve him faithfully in Padua like Thierry Mar did all through his life may peace be with you