

## OCTOBER 3

Hang on to your hat. In some respects Isaiah and Jeremiah are comparable to Elijah and Elisha. Elijah and Elisha were called upon to try to save the northern kingdom. When Elijah's ministry was rejected by the majority of the people, Elisha was called to accompany them into their judgment. Isaiah was used to warn the people of Judah of the coming judgment and he gave the people hope that there would be redemption and blessing if they followed the Lord. The people and leaders rejected that message. Now Jeremiah will be used by God to confront and appeal to anybody who would hear as Judah enters their judgment and exile.

### Jeremiah 1-2:30

#### Jeremiah 1

This is the calling of Jeremiah, probably as a teen during the reign of Josiah.

Vs. 1-3 This introductory info is very interesting. Jeremiah's dad has the same name as the high priest under Josiah. Since Jeremiah isn't mentioned as the son of a high priest, and since Jeremiah's family of priests had been excluded from the office of high priest because of Eli back in 1 Samuel, it is thought that Jeremiah's father had the same name but wasn't the high priest. Yet, they would have been living at the same time. I only mention this, because it is still possible that Jeremiah's dad had been the high priest. Hilkiyah was the one who found the only existent copy of the books of Moses. Jeremiah was from Anathoth, a city of priests three miles from Jerusalem. This is where Solomon had sent Abiathar, the priest, into exile (you remember, right?).

The Word of the Lord came to him and sounds like the calling of Samuel and Isaiah. This happened in the 13th year of Josiah, meaning that the only existent copy of the Bible, the law, had not yet been found. That would happen in the 18th year of Josiah. Since Josiah became king when he was eight, it could be that Jeremiah and Josiah were about the same age.

Jeremiah's ministry continued well beyond King Zedekiah and the fall of Jerusalem; in fact, Jeremiah might have been the writer who finished 2 Kings, recording events that happened 30 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was there when Jerusalem was destroyed and Judah was taken fully into exile. Jeremiah was the prophet who recorded the dark days of Jerusalem.

Also, just for trivia, Jeremiah would have been alive during the days of Ezekiel and Daniel, Jeremiah being the senior of these three prophets. Jeremiah might have known Ezekiel before Ezekiel was taken into exile, but he never knew him as the wild and weird prophet he became in Babylon. Although it is wildly speculative, it could be that Jeremiah might possibly have met Daniel. Interestingly, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, he specifically sought out Jeremiah and allowed him to go free. I think Daniel might have had something to do with that. Since Daniel was an important advisor to Neb, you can safely assume Daniel was giving Nebuchadnezzar important information regarding how to deal with Jerusalem and its people.

Vs. 4-8 So, what do you get out of this?

V. 5 You have to wonder how Jeremiah was *a prophet to the nations*. Did any of the nations know what God said through him? Later, we'll see that Daniel had a copy of Jeremiah, so it is likely that both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius might have heard some of what God said through him.

V. 8 God promised to deliver Jeremiah here, and later God says this even stronger. Jeremiah eventually, I think, got the idea he was untouchable, until he got his first punch in the mouth. We'll read later what Jeremiah thought of that. In the end, we'll see that except for a couple of

humiliating and dangerous situations, Jeremiah did indeed outlive all of his adversaries. So, God did protect him.

Vs. 9-10 This is the second prophet who had his mouth touched. It is cool that God Himself touched Jeremiah.

I would say that being *set* over the nations means that God will give him the authority to speak God's words of judgment against them.

Vs. 11-19 This is Jeremiah's operational check to make sure he "worked."

Vs. 11-12 The almond tree's name sounds like the word for *seeing*. Also, it was the first tree to bud, so it was watched by people to determine the time of the season. God would watch over His Word to make sure it was fulfilled.

Vs. 13-14 The pot was from the north pouring out toward the south, which would be God's wrath and Babylon pouring toward Judah and Jerusalem. Remember, all of the great threats against Jerusalem came out of the north. Even though Babylon and Persia were east, they couldn't come over the desert and so had to go north along the rivers and then move south toward Israel.

V. 17 It says, *dress yourself for work*, but the note says "gird up your loins," which also meant to get ready for a fight or for action. God told Job twice to gird up his loins. Jeremiah was about to have a very action packed life, sometimes fighting for his life.

Vs. 18-19 Jeremiah was untouchable for a time, and in the end, he survived all of the hate and destruction.

## Jeremiah 2

There is no way to know exactly when this was written. If it was before Josiah found the Book of the Law, then this may have helped lead to his reforms. Verse 16 could mean the death of Josiah, in which case, this would have been shortly after that event.

Vs. 1-3 This is what Israel was, probably just before they entered the land after the older, rebellious generation had died off.

Vs. 4-8 This is the sin of the nation after entering the land, led by three groups of leaders. What was the purpose of each group? It sums up total loss and corruption in a culture.

Vs. 9-13 No nation ever leaves their gods, but Israel did. Why doesn't a nation leave their gods? I think it is because those gods are dead and are really controlled by the people. A living God is much harder to live with.

Their crime is described in v. 13 as having two parts. Do you see the difference in those two actions, yet how they fit together? It is the same today. Going to God means depending on God. If you have your own source other than God, you can avoid Him. Living water was superior to stagnant water that sat in a cistern.

Vs. 14-19 Judah had gone to Egypt and Assyria for help rather than going to God, as if they were slaves looking for help from their master.

V. 16 could mean the death of Josiah, either before or after it happened. Or it could mean that every time they went to Egypt they kept having to pay money for no real help, consequently getting scalped.

Vs. 20-22 Although God freed them from Egypt, they willingly became slaves of idols. This is one of those places where God is using Israel to show us what mankind is really like even with the truth, but without a spiritual rebirth. The sin within us is too strong and defies truth, logic and reality. The sickness is spiritual and it needs a spiritual cure. And God is the only doctor. Even

after receiving the "cure," we need to stay in the Word daily and follow Him daily. The full cure comes when we step into a new body.

Vs. 23-25 Their zeal for idols was like an animal in heat. Verse 25 says it was all for the sake of comfort and appetite.

Vs. 26-28 They have been caught by God and He will make them feel shame.

Vs. 29-30 They complained against God, yet as God punished them, they didn't turn to Him, but instead kept devouring one another.

I was reminded of Jesus' word regarding the stress of the Tribulation in Matthew 24:12, *And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.* When things get worse for people as God's judgment approaches, it will reveal what is truly in people's hearts. Now is a good time for us to be working in the harvest.

#### Philippians 4

V. 1 *Stand firm* how? From what Paul has just said, what makes them *stand firm*? If it has to do with 3:17, then it really goes all the way back to 3:7 and everything thereafter. Jesus will be at the center of this stand.

Vs. 2-3 Sometimes you just need a wise mediator, even among seasoned disciples. Paul knew that these women would have a hard time working this out alone. Some malfunctions are like that. I have been in situations where I needed and lacked a wise mediator.

Vs. 4-7 Notice that the rejoicing and the forbearance are linked to knowing, really knowing, that the Lord is present. The Lord is not *at hand* as in His imminent return; but like we saw in Job, He is present in everything in our lives, working for His glory and purpose. That gives us stability and hope, if we truly know and acknowledge it.

Notice that *the peace...which surpasses all understanding* is linked to that "knowing" and also to a life where everything is always, constantly, being brought before God. We often tend to use vs. 6 & 7 like a rabbit's foot. We get in trouble and then rub it for good luck. This peace is for those who are always coming to God, not just when they are in trouble.

Vs. 8-9 *Finally* Paul got back to the *finally* from 3:1.

So, what do you do when you are surrounded by stress and persecution? Paul says to think on good stuff and to do what Paul has taught them. Using Psalm 119 as a guide, I would also say that memorizing Scripture is a good idea. Also, using Psalm 42 as a guide, I would say recounting times of God's past blessing and kindness helps too.

Vs. 10-20 There are some good things in this section. Verse 13 is one of those gems.

V. 17 Paul, like any maker of disciples, was looking for the life of Christ coming out through the lives of the Philippians. Life in knowing Jesus is seen in expressing Christ's love.

Vs. 19-20 Great verses.

Vs. 21-22 While Paul was in jail, he was often attended by guards. Sometimes he was chained between two of them. As Howard Hendricks observed, if Paul was chained to them, that means they were chained to him. Imagine the assignment of sitting next to this distressing individual for four-hour stretches. That would give Paul more than enough time to share the Four Laws, twice.

And now Paul says that there were believers all over *Caesar's household*. That's what you call a "chain reaction."

There is such a contrast in the readings today. In the OT we have the judgment against Israel, and in the NT we have a sense of the Philippians working hard in the harvest in spite of their challenges. But there is one thing that links both readings: A servant was called to faithfully

proclaim the Word in this present darkness. As disciples we are called to be light, but at times the darkness seems so strong. But it isn't we who are supposed to shine; it is Jesus, and in us, as we follow Him in the harvest, praising Him, reaching out, making disciples. He is stronger. You might want to listen to "Stronger," by Hillsong Chapel.

### **Psalm 75**

Judging by what we read in Psalm 73, and now see here, Asaph had a hard time looking at the evil and proud people around him, wondering why they prospered. The focus here seems to be how the righteous are to keep their hearts from being consumed with the unfairness they see around them. As Paul said to the Romans in Romans 12:19, *"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"*

V. 1 This is what Asaph learned in the trials, to look to the Lord's deeds and to praise God.

Vs. 2-3 His judgment will be to the entire earth.

Vs. 4-5 And the judgment will extend to every individual.

Vs. 6-8 And Asaph learned not to occupy himself with God's judgment, because it is God who will judge in the measure that He sees fit.

Vs. 9-10 Those who fear the Lord and follow Him will declare God's praise forever. The proud and all who rebel against God and resist Him will get their horns cut off; that is, they will be humbled as they are judged.

God uses wickedness and evil and injustice for His purposes, so they won't be going away anytime soon. As disciples, we need to learn how to live with these in the grace of God. We keep our eyes on the Lord, praise Him and follow our Lord in the harvest.

### **Proverbs 24:17-20**

This is good advice considering what we just read in Psalm 75. Add to that what Jesus tells His disciples that they should love their enemies and do good to those who hate them, and you have the complete picture. God allows us to be in situations where we can fret so that we can grow. We have to take what we know is true and make it a part of our hearts in following the Word and the Spirit. When presented with the opportunity, we are to do good for these people. It gives them an opportunity to seek help or repent. If nothing else, it heaps burning coals upon their heads and messes with their minds. ☺