

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

TEXT: JEREMIAH 1:1-10

INTRODUCTION:

1. Jeremiah the prophet wrote two books – the book of Jeremiah and the Lamentations of Jeremiah.
2. Jeremiah was born into a family of priests in the town of Anathoth, just north of Jerusalem (1:1). But God called Jeremiah to be a prophet, not a priest (1:5).
3. Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry during the reign of King Josiah (1:2), which would be about 629 BC (*Scofield Bible*).
4. Jeremiah's stern warnings were messages from the LORD (1:2, 7, 9). The people of Judah were warned to repent and turn from their idolatry, but the people refused to listen (Jer. 25:1-9; cf. 1:14).
5. Over 25 years ago, J Vernon McGee wrote these words, "You and I are living at a time which is probably like the time of Jeremiah... Although we are a strong nation, within is the same corruption which will actually carry us down to dismemberment and disaster. It is coming, my friend. Revolution may be just around the corner. I know what I am saying is not popular today. We don't hear anything like this through the media. Instead, we have panels of experts who discuss how we are going to improve society and how we can work out our problems. Today God is left out of the picture totally – absolutely left out. If the Bible is mentioned, it is mentioned with a curled lip by some unbeliever. The ones who are believers and have a message from God are pushed aside" (*Thru the Bible*).
6. Dr. McGee was right – our country is in big trouble, but God has been left out of the picture altogether. Furthermore, those who believe the Bible has the answer are being pushed aside and told to shut up.

I. THE CALL FROM GOD

1. Jeremiah's father was a priest, but God called him to be a prophet (1:5).
2. The LORD told Jeremiah, "I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (1:5b) – not just to Judah and Israel, but "to the nations" – Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, Moab, Ammon, etc. (cf. 1:10a).
3. Jeremiah 46:1 says, "The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles."
4. The LORD says in Jeremiah 46:28, "Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee..."

5. The LORD says in Jeremiah 1:5, “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.”
6. The Bible clearly teaches that life starts at conception, and that God knew us before we were born. Aren’t you glad Jeremiah’s mother didn’t go out and get an abortion?!
7. It’s a good thing Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, did not have an abortion. Luke 1:41 says, “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.”
8. Not “the fetus,” but the “babe.”
9. Elisabeth then said to Mary, “For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.” I’m glad Elisabeth was not “pro-choice.”
10. I hate to say it, but the majority of politicians in Albany and in Washington want taxpayers to pay for women to kill their babies (cf. Psalm 139:13-16).
11. For the last couple of weeks, there has been a big smoke screen over Rush Limbaugh's vulgar remarks about Sandra Fluke, but the media is not explaining the real story. Consequently, most Americans are misinformed. Sandra Fluke is the Georgetown University Law School student who testified before the Congressional committee on the government forcing taxpayers to pay for free contraception, even for students attending prestigious law schools. Her testimony was ridiculous but unfortunately it has been overlooked in the firestorm over Limbaugh's remarks.

A recent report about what is taking place:

Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius claimed in a congressional hearing on Thursday that the new Health and Human Services (HHS) regulation that requires all health-care plans in the United States to cover sterilizations and all Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved contraceptives will not require the plans to cover any abortifacients, which cause the death of a human embryo.

However, all FDA-approved contraceptives include emergency contraceptives such as Plan B and Ella (Ulipristal), which do in fact cause the death of human embryos.

At a hearing of the Health Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee on Thursday, Sebelius said, “There also is no abortifacient drug that is part of the FDA-approved contraception [list].”

Sebelius, under questioning by Rep. Tim Murphy (R-Pa.), a clinical psychologist, said that the so-called “Morning After” pill is not an abortifacient because it does not interfere with pregnancy.

“It is a contraceptive drug, not an abortifacient,” she said. “It is not an abortifacient. It does not interfere with a pregnancy. If the morning after pill were taken and a female were pregnant, the pregnancy is not interrupted. That’s the definition of an abortifacient.”

However, the FDA list of approved contraceptive drugs does include morning after pills, such as Plan B and Ella that can work by blocking a human embryo from implanting in the uterus. When an embryo is blocked from implanting, the embryo dies. {Note: could be weeks after conception.}

The Obama administration, led by Secretary Sebelius, issued final regulations in February that would force all insurance companies to provide coverage of contraceptives, including abortifacients and sterilizations.

There is widespread opposition to this mandate because it is a violation of religious liberty under the First Amendment – in this case, the federal government forcing individuals to subsidize products and services that are contrary to their religious beliefs.

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GOD

1. Jeremiah was young, perhaps about 20 years old (1:6). The Hebrew word translated “child” (1:6) can mean “young man.” Jeremiah was afraid, but the LORD encouraged him (1:6-8).
2. The great expositor, G Campbell Morgan, said there are four key words to describe the ministry of Jeremiah in chapter 1: ordination, revelation, illustration, and exhortation.
3. Ordination – “I ordained thee” (1:5). Some of the greatest preachers, like HA Ironside and Charles Haddon Spurgeon and DL Moody, were never ordained by a church. But like the prophet Jeremiah, they were ordained by the Lord.
4. Revelation – “Whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak” (1:7). “Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (1:9). It is important to understand that the Bible is unlike all the other books in this world – it is the Word of God (1:2, 4, 9, 11).

5. When he was near death, Sir Walter Scott said, “Get me the book! Get me the book!” His son-in-law said, “Which book?” (He had a large library.) He said, “The Bible! That’s the only book.”
6. Illustration – To illustrate the will of God, and the plan of God, the LORD gave Jeremiah the sign of the rod of the almond tree, and the sign of the seething pot (1:11-13).
7. Exhortation – “Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak...” (1:17).
8. It was Jeremiah's job to wake the people up. They were dead spiritually. They were cold and backslidden. Therefore, Jeremiah was given a strong message to deliver from the LORD.

III. THE MESSAGE FROM GOD

1. “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (Jer. 1:10).
2. Of this six-fold commission, four injunctions could be described as destructive, and only the latter two constructive.
3. People often criticize strong preaching. They say it is too “negative,” or “too hard,” or “too rough,” etc. But the LORD told Jeremiah to “root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down” (1:10).
4. That sounds pretty rough! By the way, Jeremiah preached hard against sin but he had a compassionate heart. He is often called "the Weeping Prophet" (cf. 9:1).
5. Rooting out and pulling down is rough work, but sometimes it has to be done. Building and planting is great work. But building and planting has to be preceded by a rooting-out and a pulling-down, by destroying and demolishing.
6. When we purchased this building we had to do a lot of demolition work. We were filling up big 30-yard containers on a regular basis for months at a time.
7. All this was necessary in order for us to properly begin our remodeling work.
8. Back in the days of Jeremiah, Judah had become overgrown with weeds – the weeds of ritualism and hypocrisy and idolatry. These bad weeds had to be “rooted out” (1:10).
9. Judah was in a backslidden condition. The people turned their back on God and were worshipping idols (cf. 1:16).

10. The LORD called Jeremiah to preach against their apostasy. Jeremiah has been called an “iconoclast.” An iconoclast is a person who destroys religious images or opposes their veneration.
11. However, there is another definition of an iconoclast – he is a “person who attacks settled beliefs or institutions.”
12. Isaiah 58:1 says, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."
13. When John the Baptist saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said unto them, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:7).
14. When Herod started an adulterous relationship with his brother Philip’s wife, John the Baptist confronted him, and said, “It is not lawful for thee to have her” (Matt. 14:4).
15. Second Timothy 4:2 says, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
16. Great preachers throughout history had to root out and pull down before they could build and plant (1:10).
17. Girolamo Savonarola was a 15th century Italian priest and leader of Florence from 1494 until he was burnt at the stake by the RCC in 1498.
18. Homosexuality had previously been tolerated in the city of Florence, but when Savonarola set up a “Christian Republic” in Florence, one of his first acts was to make sodomy a capital crime.
19. In 1497, Savonarola and his followers carried out the “Bonfire of the Vanities.” They sent boys from door to door collecting lewd pictures, pagan books, immoral sculptures, gaming tables, immodest dresses, and the works of immoral poets, and then burnt them all in a large pile in the large Piazza (city square) in Florence.
20. Martin Luther is another example of a man who knew how “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down,” as well as how “to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10).
21. Luther attacked the false teachings and practices of the RCC. He attacked their practice of indulgences. The RCC sold these so-called “indulgences” so that RC’s could supposedly spend less time in purgatory.
22. Luther attacked the false doctrine of purgatory and he attacked the papacy, which promoted all of this unscriptural foolishness.
23. Luther rooted out and pulled down, etc. But he also did much building and planting. Luther translated the Bible into German. He also published many books, tracts, and pamphlets. He composed great hymns, like “A Mighty Fortress is our God.”

24. Martin Luther was the leader of the Protestant Reformation. He radically transformed the continent of Europe and the British Isles, and that philosophy came over to the United States of America, and it radically transformed North America.
25. William Tyndale left England for the continent and was influenced greatly by Luther's translation work and stand against the RCC. Tyndale translated the Bible into English and was burned at the stake by the RCC in 1536.
26. Scholars have estimated that our beloved King James Version New Testament is 83.7 per cent Tyndale's work, with the KJV Old Testament 75.7 per cent Tyndale's.
27. Tyndale was challenged by an arrogant RC priest, who said to him, "We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's."
28. William Tyndale replied, "I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, I will cause the boy that drives the plow in England to know more of the Scriptures than the Pope himself!"
29. Tyndale's last words as he was burnt at the stake were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!"
30. His prayer was answered and within twelve months the King of England had tolerated a version of the Bible, so that every church in England should possess a copy, and that another translation was at once licensed, which Archbishop Thomas Cranmer preferred, and which was substantially Tyndale's version.
31. More steps were taken, leading up to the Authorized King James Version in 1611.
32. So we can see that William Tyndale had to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, before he could build and plant.
33. Billy Sunday knew how to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build and to plant.
34. Billy Sunday preached hard against alcohol, and his preaching played a significant role in the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, prohibiting alcohol (later repealed by the Twenty-first Amendment in 1933).
35. Billy Sunday preached great revival meetings. It has been estimated that over one million souls were saved at his meetings. Many churches were organized as a result of his preaching.
36. Edwin Orr said, "The present obvious dearth of revival is largely due to the fact that the majority of Christians are out of touch with the source of Divine power... To give a sick stomach an overdose of cream is to risk indigestion. Even a sick stomach prefers the taste of cream to the flavor of the bitter medicine. Still the bitter medicine is necessary, and it does not prevent the enjoying and digesting of good food afterwards – rather it creates the actual

appetite of good health, which is quite distinct from the false cravings of indigestion.”

37. Dr. Orr was once speaking at a great convention in England. He began by preaching hard against sin, and the Lord used His word to create deep conviction. The meeting was thronged with Christians getting right with God, and sinners saved. People were stirred to confession and repentance, and many souls were saved.
38. After those great meetings, he went to preach at another convention, not far away. He felt led to speak first of the shortcomings of believers and their need to get right with God.
39. But the other speakers at the conference contradicted him. Their message seemed to be: “God accepts you the way you are, and everything is going to be okay.”
40. For days there was confusion with these two contrary messages. The fire was put out and the Holy Spirit was quenched.

CONCLUSION:

1. Jeremiah 4:3 says, “For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.”
2. Too many preachers and soulwinners are sowing among the thorns. First we have to break up the fallow ground (4:3). It is essential that we root out and pull down (1:10).
3. Charles Finney said, “Fallow ground needs to be broken up and mellowed before it is suited to receive grain. To break up the fallow ground is to break up your hearts.”
4. I prefer to build and to plant. One of the greatest blessings in my life was planting this church. But when God called me to preach, He made it very clear to me that I was “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down” (1:10).