

**Message #5****Jeremiah 1:11-19**

Most people love positive ministries with positive messages and positive ministers. Can you just imagine what would happen if a candidate for a church ministry came to the church and preached his first message that said, “You people are wicked and God is going to destroy you.” I doubt the congregation would vote him in. There probably would not be too many who would like him. One way we know that is because of what happened to Jeremiah.

It must have been a humbling moment and an honorable moment when God called Jeremiah to become His prophet. Jeremiah must have reflected on the fact that God had caused him to be born and designed him to be His prophet and had called him to speak not just to Israel and Judah, but to all the nations.

But some time later, Jeremiah got his first glimpse as to what being God’s prophet would mean. His assignment would not be one well-received by the majority of people. His messages that he would proclaim would not win him the prophet of the year award.

What God decided to do was to start Jeremiah off with his first glimpse of his calling. What we see here is,

**SHORTLY AFTER GOD CALLED JEREMIAH TO BE A PROPHET, HE GAVE HIM TWO OBJECTS TO SEE TO AUTHENTICATE THAT GOD WAS WITH JEREMIAH, AND HIS MINISTRY WOULD BE ONE THAT WOULD FEATURE MANY WARNINGS OF COMING JUDGMENT.**

If a nation does not turn away from its evil and turn back to God, God will destroy it. That is Jeremiah’s message and it is as relevant today as it was when Jeremiah proclaimed it.

The way Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry begins is fascinating. God reveals three main opening messages to Jeremiah and two of them are illustrations:

**MESSAGE #1** – The message and illustration of the almond tree. **1:11-12**

**Verse 11** begins with “the word of the LORD came” to Jeremiah. Now there is a great deal to be learned in these two verses about how to handle God’s word.

In **verse 11** God asked Jeremiah, “What do you see?” Jeremiah replies, “I see a rod of an almond tree.”

In **verse 12**, then God said, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.” Do you see what God says here, “I am watching over My word.” God carefully watches over His word and how it is being handled. God says I will perform everything My word says.

So as Jeremiah begins his prophetic ministry, God is teaching him that you need to be very precise to observe and interpret exactly what you see in my word. You need to see exactly what is there and you need to communicate exactly what is there. Do not add to it or subtract from it.

This is where many ministers and those who read the Bible make major mistakes. They look at a text and the first thing they say is “What does this mean to me?” The first thing they should say is “What is actually here and what does it actually mean or say?” “What am I actually seeing here in written form?”

God wants His word handled precisely and accurately. He wants His people to see exactly what is there in a text. This is how God starts Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry.

Now what Jeremiah actually saw was “a rod or bud or branch of an almond tree.” The Hebrew word “rod” is “maqel.” This word refers to a branch that is about to germinate or sprout (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 503-504).

Now the branch of an almond tree was one of the first trees to blossom in the spring in the Mediterranean world. It was one of the first signs that spring was approaching.

The “budding rod” or “budding branch” imagery is often used in the O.T. as a warning of coming judgment (Ez. 7:10-11). So Jeremiah is first seeing something that will turn out to be an illustration of pending judgment.

There is a fascinating use of Hebrew in this verse that God Himself gives to Jeremiah. Jeremiah says I am seeing an almond tree (“**shaqed**”) and God says, “I am watching over what you see (“**shoqed**”). That word means God has fixed His sights and attention on His word and He is about to fulfill it.

God wants Jeremiah to know that He is carefully watching over His word and this almond tree that he sees beginning to blossom means that His judgment is soon to blossom and it will be his job to communicate that.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe said that this almond tree illustration absolutely guarantees God’s word concerning His judgment will be fulfilled. It was Jeremiah’s responsibility to communicate that.

## **MESSAGE #2 – The message and illustration of the boiling pot. 1:13-16**

Once again, “The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah.” For the second time He asked Jeremiah what he saw. **Now the first thing Jeremiah saw dealt with the budding time of the judgment. This time what he sees deals with the pending direction of the judgment.**

Jeremiah says to God in **verse 13**, “I see a boiling pot facing away from the north.” Again Jeremiah’s job was to carefully and accurately report what the word of God said. The job of a man of God is to expound exactly what is in the text.

Now what Jeremiah saw was something boiling that was going to come out of the north. The pot was tilted away from the north direction, which would mean it will spill over to the south direction. **The scalding contents of the boiling pot would be poured out in a south direction, from a north direction.**

Now we do not have to speculate what this meant, because God interprets what Jeremiah saw.

According to **verses 14**, God says He is going to bring evil and calamity out of the north to come up against Jerusalem and all the cities and people of the land.

The primary weapon that God would use to pour out His vengeance in Jeremiah's day would be Babylon. Now Babylon sits to the east of Israel, not to the north. However, all of Israel's enemies, including Babylon, struck from the north. The Arabian Desert made attacking from the east almost impossible. So the main route that all powers have used to attack Israel has been from the north.

God, Himself, would cause evil things to hit His own people because they refused to turn to Him and His word. He would actually sovereignly control the direction of the evil.

What is described in **verses 15-16** is a series of attacks from the north that would culminate with Nebuchadnezzar coming to totally devastate and destroy Israel, Jerusalem, and the people.

God is very clear in **verse 16**, why He will permit this:

- 1) He is pronouncing His judgments on His own people.
- 2) His own people have pursued wickedness.
- 3) His own people have forsaken God.
- 4) His own people had offered sacrifices to other gods.
- 5) His own people have worshipped gods they made with their own hands.

When God's own people begin to put something else first above God, they are setting themselves up for judgment.

**So in the budding branch, God reveals to Jeremiah the time of the pending judgment and the boiling pot reveals to Jeremiah the direction of the pending judgment.**

Do you want to know what most ministers and prophets were telling the people in Jeremiah's day?

- 1) Jeremiah 5:12-13 - prophets of God are bags of wind and they are lying. God will never hurt us.
- 2) Jeremiah 8:11-12 - they were telling the people we are at wonderful peace with God.

The ministers in Jeremiah's day were telling the people they were fine just the way they were and that God would never judge them.

They were loved by God and at peace with God and God says Jeremiah, your job will be to tell the people the truth. You tell them the religious leaders are liars and I am going to send a severe judgment against My own people.

**MESSAGE #3** – The message that God will always protect Jeremiah. **1:17-19**

Jeremiah is a young man and this is one tough assignment. So God came to Jeremiah with a series of critical personal messages just for him:

**Message #1** - He was to gird up his loins and get going. **1:17a**

There is a time to sit quietly and do nothing, but there is also a time to get up and get going. Jeremiah was getting a direct revelatory message from God; it is time for you to get going.

**Message #2** - He was to speak all of the words of God. **1:17b**

The job of a true minister of God is not to pick and choose things to say, but to communicate “all” the word and commands of God.

**Message #3** - He was not to be dismayed or terrified before them. **1:17c**

God gave Jeremiah a serious warning here and it is a very strong warning. The English words “dismayed” or “terrified” do not really capture the Hebrew. This is a very threatening warning of bringing down and breaking to pieces.

God tells Jeremiah that if you are too terrified to tell My word to the people, I will break you before the people. We are not certain all that this means, but it isn't good. This is a serious warning to Jeremiah.

That word means instead of the people breaking under him, he would be broken under them (*Ibid.*, p. 862). God would break him down before the people.

In paraphrasing John Calvin, he said this verse contains critical doctrine. God's people doing His work and proclaiming His truth will have His strength, His protection and courage that will make them a formidable force in this world. But if God's people become timid and turn here and there away from proclaiming the truth of God because they fear men, God will cause them to tremble and be contemptible until they take their last breath on this earth (John Calvin, *Jeremiah 1-19*, p. 64).

**Message #4** - God has made Jeremiah as a fortified city. **1:18a**

Jeremiah would find himself surrounded by many enemies even from his own people, but he would be like a fortified city. They would not be able to get at him.

**Message #5** - God has made Jeremiah as a pillar of iron. **1:18b**

Jeremiah would be like a pillar of iron. Immoveable or unbreakable, capable of withstanding anyone or anything. He will not be broken.

**Message #6** - God has made Jeremiah as walls of bronze. **1:18c**

There were no bronze walls in existence, but Jeremiah would be one. He would be God's man for everyone and God's man for everywhere. His ministry would encompass all of the land, the Kings of Judah, the princes, the priests and the people of the land. The people of the land refer to his own Jewish people.

**Message #7** - The people will fight against you but they will not overcome you. **1:19a**

His own Jewish people would fight against Jeremiah. They will not like him and they will not like his message.

**Message #8** - God says to Jeremiah I am with you. **1:19b**

If God is with us, we have nothing to fear.

**Message #9** - God says to Jeremiah I will deliver you. **1:19c**

**Message #10** - God says to Jeremiah I declare this to you. **1:19d**

Jeremiah's only weapon was the word of God (Jer. 23:29). But His protection was directly from God. Jeremiah would need to remember what God told him many times in his 40-plus year ministry.

He would remember that God was with him and would sustain him.