



January 27, 2008

## *A Troubled Prophet*

The nation of Judah was in turmoil. God's people had digressed into evil and idolatry, forsaking the one who had blessed them and established their nation. In the twilight days of the Southern kingdom of Judah, Jeremiah was called upon to issue the final warnings and pronouncements of judgment against the Hebrews in an effort to bring them to their senses before their nation was destroyed. The nation had exchanged the glory of God for the idols of pagan nations around them, a deed which was unlikely among the heathen that surrounded them (**Jer 2.11**). The nation had been brought into being as a nation of priests to keep the name of the Lord alive in the earth (**Ex 19.5**) and to prepare the way for the Messiah who would eventually take away the sins of the world (**Isa 2.2, Mic 4.1-4**). As Jeremiah sounded the proclamations of God, he was met with insolence, disrespect and conspiracy. The life of the prophet was one which we would not choose to live and yet Jeremiah was faithful and delivered the message God revealed to him. To make life even harder at this time, the comforts of home and family were not to be his. Jeremiah was the son of a priest (**Jer 1.1**) during a time when the majority of priests and Levites were unfaithful to the Lord. He was a young man when he was called upon by God to the work that was set before him (**Jer 1.6**) and he was told not to marry nor to have children (**Jer 16.2**). While this may have been a physical hardship in a material sense, it was also a blessing due to the coming destruction that God intended to visit upon the people. We see that Jeremiah lacked confidence in himself, and, like us, initially drew back from the work seeing the scale of the task set before him. God assured him that He would be with him and stated, "***I will make my words in thy mouth fire...***" (**Jer 5.14**). Jeremiah was sent to speak to a people that had become corrupt and for that God stated, "***...they shall die grievous deaths...***" (**Jer 16.3-4**). At one point Jeremiah became so overwhelmed with the negative reactions of the king and people that he stated that he would not make mention of him (**Jer 20.9**) and cursed the day that

he was born (**Jer 20.14-18**). In spite of the message of destruction and judgment that was to come, Jeremiah was also entrusted with a statement of reassurance and hope for the faithful telling them that in spite the events that were to transpire they had not been forsaken by the Lord (**Jer 51.5**). Throughout the Biblical narrative of the lives of the prophets, we see that God used the men called upon to do His work in such a way that their lives mirrored many of the hardships that had been brought about by the evil of the nation. Jeremiah lived to see the downfall of Judah that God promised would come. In our lives we sometimes think that being a Christian, and having the responsibility to teach others, may be a fruitless task. In the world in which we live, it appears that every day the attitude of the general public is farther from an interest in truth and the God that created us all. Jeremiah perhaps shared some of these feelings as he delivered an unpopular message during a time of impending doom and tragedy for those who would not listen. In spite of the reactions that he met, Jeremiah, filled with the word of God, continued on in the work that he was charged to do. What hardships do we face as we go about our daily tasks as we meet those who appear to have an interest in spiritual things but who have been influenced by the recreational and material slant that many "churches" place on being religious. Are we really faced with so much that we can afford to be discouraged. Jeremiah felt this way. He was faced with a hostile nation and a king who did everything to him short of taking his life and yet the prophet was faithful and delivered the message that was commanded of him. Many of God's faithful servants lived and worked under extreme conditions and many paid for this with their lives. The final message is that there is hope and deliverance. If no one else responds to us, we need to do the work knowing that God is aware of what we are doing and will reward us one day if we remain true to Him.

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