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## *Called to Speak for the Lord – the Book of Jeremiah*

*September 6, 2020*

**Sermon Text:** Jeremiah 1

**Scripture Reading:** Jeremiah 36

The book of Jeremiah is a book for us today. It was written some 600 years before Christ came and yet it is timeless. God does not change. His promises do not change. Our enemy uses the same tactics today that he did in Jeremiah's time. Man's sin is the same – his craving for idols and rejection of the living and true God. And Jeremiah's experience is, to lesser or greater degree, the experience of any true Christian living in this fallen world.

Jeremiah's experience as God's prophet – the hatred brought against him by his own family, his fellow priests, and his countrymen – show us what the world will try in order to silence the Word of God.

Jeremiah 36:21-24 ESV Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Elishama the secretary. And Jehudi read it to the king and all the officials who stood beside the king. (22) It was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in the winter house, and there was a fire burning in the fire pot before him. (23) As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a knife and throw them into the fire in the fire pot, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the fire pot. (24) Yet neither the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words was afraid, nor did they tear their garments.

But God's Word can never be silenced or destroyed, broken or stopped. He speaks and it is done.

I mentioned last time that academia loves to dissect the books of the Bible and much of that dissection is performed by people who do not know the Lord and who see the Bible as just another book written by human beings.

They do not, in other words, come to the Bible confessing it to be the inspired, inerrant, Word of God. In their detailed examinations of, for example, Jeremiah, they will propose all sorts of theories about how this book came to be. They do not believe that Jeremiah wrote it, or that he really did speak for the Lord. Usually their theories entail some kind of editor or more accurately, editors, who at some point much later than Jeremiah's time, gathered material together and edited it all into the book we have today. This is their approach to all of the Bible – Daniel did not write Daniel, he did not really prophecy centuries before the events he speaks of, but someone else living long after his day wrote the book and made it look like Daniel wrote it before the fact.

Now, my complaint and rebuke is with the conservative commentators who claim to believe the Bible is God's Word. And my complaint is that they treat these scholars as their fellows in the world of academia. They summarize what such men say about the Bible – in this case about Jeremiah – analyze their theories, and then propose their own. Oh, they will offer criticism of what these men say, but they do so on a cold, scientific level of analysis. They stop short – unlike the

Lord Jesus did in confronting the Pharisees and Sadducees, or Paul in confronting the intellectual elite of his day, and of course unlike Jeremiah and the other prophets. They stop short in that *they fail to rebuke their fellow academics for their wicked unbelief and false teachings in and about the Word of God*. It is an evil thing to handle God's Word in such a manner and to energetically work to deceive people and destroy their faith. Yet typically these supposed Christian theologians remain silent, never denouncing the wolves for what they are.

Why do they do so? They do it because they do not want to be a Jeremiah. They do not want to be hated or booted out of their positions. They want the praise of men. If you want to know what to expect at the hands of the world, or at the hands of the supposed "church," then here you have it in the book of Jeremiah.

And Jeremiah also shows us the ugliness of man's sin. In this book we are going to see the terrible results of rejecting the Lord and how God deals in particular with people who claim to belong to Him, but in fact do not love, know, or obey Him. It is a book for our own nation today. It is a sober warning

that their comes a time when the line is crossed by sinful, wicked people, so that their doom is carved in stone – so certain it is that the Lord forbids Jeremiah from even praying for such people. They have been handed over to wrath and judgment and nothing will change that.

And perhaps most amazing of all is this – in the midst of all the pronouncements of God’s wrath and judgment against Israel and Judah, Jeremiah repeatedly announces a theme that almost seems out of place every time we read it – *the faithfulness of God to His promises, and His resolve to make a new people for Himself by washing away their sins and giving them a new heart.* Hope, in other words, shines in the darkness.

### God’s Divine Authentication

How then do we know that this book of Jeremiah belongs in the Bible? That is, how do we know that all these critics are lying when they reject it as God’s Word? The answer is quite simple:

First of all, it claims to be God’s Word over and over and over again:

(Jeremiah 1:11 ESV) And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

“Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see an almond branch.”

(Jeremiah 7:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

(Jeremiah 11:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

(Jeremiah 14:1 ESV) The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought:

(Jeremiah 18:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

(Jeremiah 21:1 ESV) This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchiah and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, saying,

(Jeremiah 25:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon),

(Jeremiah 27:1 ESV) In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD.

(Jeremiah 28:12 ESV) Sometime after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke-bars from off the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 29:30 ESV) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 30:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

(Jeremiah 32:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.

(Jeremiah 32:6 ESV) Jeremiah said, “The word of the LORD came to me:

(Jeremiah 32:26 ESV) The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 33:1 ESV) The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard:

(Jeremiah 33:19 ESV) The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 33:23 ESV) The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 34:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth under his dominion and all the peoples were fighting against Jerusalem and all of its cities:

(Jeremiah 34:8 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of liberty to them,

(Jeremiah 34:12 ESV) The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

(Jeremiah 35:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:

(Jeremiah 35:12 ESV) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 36:1 ESV) In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

(Jeremiah 36:27 ESV) Now after the king had burned the scroll with the

words that Baruch wrote at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:

(Jeremiah 37:6 ESV) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet:

(Jeremiah 39:15 ESV) The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the guard:

(Jeremiah 40:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he took him bound in chains along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.

(Jeremiah 42:7 ESV) At the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah.

(Jeremiah 43:8 ESV) Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes:

(Jeremiah 44:1 ESV) The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Judeans who lived in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros,

(Jeremiah 46:1 ESV) The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations.

(Jeremiah 47:1 ESV) The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh struck down Gaza.

(Jeremiah 49:34 ESV) The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah.

And then you have all of these testimonies:

Ezra 1:1 ESV In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

2 Chronicles 36:20-21 ESV He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, (21) to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until

the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

2 Chronicles 36:12 ESV He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD.

Daniel 9:2 ESV in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

Matthew 2:17-18 ESV Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: (18) “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Matthew 27:9 ESV Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,

Luke 24:27 ESV And beginning with

Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Hebrews 8:8-13 ESV For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (9) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. (10) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (11) And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. (12) For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” (13) In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

And there you have your answer in crystal clear terms. Daniel, Matthew, the Lord Jesus, and the author of Hebrews all present Jeremiah as the Word of God. In other words, you see, when someone dismisses Jeremiah and refuses to acknowledge that he was a true prophet called by God and that what we have here then is the Word of God, they are calling Daniel, Matthew, the Lord Jesus, and the Apostles – fools at best or liars. And we need to call them out on it.

Let's begin then with the opening words of chapter 1 –

Jeremiah 1:1-3 ESV The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, (2) to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. (3) It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Jeremiah lived in Judah, the southern kingdom, before and during the fall of

Jerusalem to the Babylonians. That conquest was in 587BC so Jeremiah's time was, in round numbers. Some 6 centuries before Christ came.

The northern kingdom of Israel had already fallen to the Assyrians long before, in 722BC, and Jeremiah will make reference to that event several times. He tells his countrymen that they need to seriously consider what happened to Israel, and that in fact wicked Israel was more righteous than they because Judah had seen what the Lord did to Israel, yet Judah did not repent.

You see, as we have mentioned already, that the book opens very typically with the account of the call of the prophet (see vss 4-19) and that you have this declaration right off – "...to whom the word of the Lord came...".

Jeremiah was a priest, the son of a priest, who lived in Anathoth near Jerusalem. As we will see, he would be hated by his own family and by his fellow priests. Think of Jeremiah as someone like Martin Luther who the Lord raises up in a time of horrid corruption in the visible church and speaks against it, publishing God's Word – the Bible – for all to read.

Jeremiah 36:1-6 ESV In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: (2) “Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. (3) It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.” (4) Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD that he had spoken to him. (5) And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, “I am banned from going to the house of the LORD, (6) so you are to go, and on a day of fasting in the hearing of all the people in the LORD's house you shall read the words of the LORD from the scroll that you have written at my dictation. You shall read them also in the hearing of all the men of Judah who come out of their cities.

The parallels between Jeremiah and Luther are really rather amazing and this tells us that the enemy works in typical, consistent ways to silence

God's Word. We can expect the same in our day.

For speaking God's Word faithfully, Jeremiah is going to undergo severe persecution. He will be banned from, you might say, “the church.” Murder plots will be launched against him. Sometimes he tried to stop speaking because it just got him into trouble – but he says he could not hold it in. He has to speak the Word the Lord gave him.

You can see already then that there are obvious applications of this book to us in our own day – that the Word which came to Jeremiah *comes to us here in the Scriptures for our own good, for our encouragement, and sometimes for our warning.*

Here is our own call from Christ, and as you see, it is very similar to that of Jeremiah's -

John 15:18-27 ESV “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater

than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (21) But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. (22) If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. (23) Whoever hates me hates my Father also. (24) If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. (25) But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’ (26) “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. (27) And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.