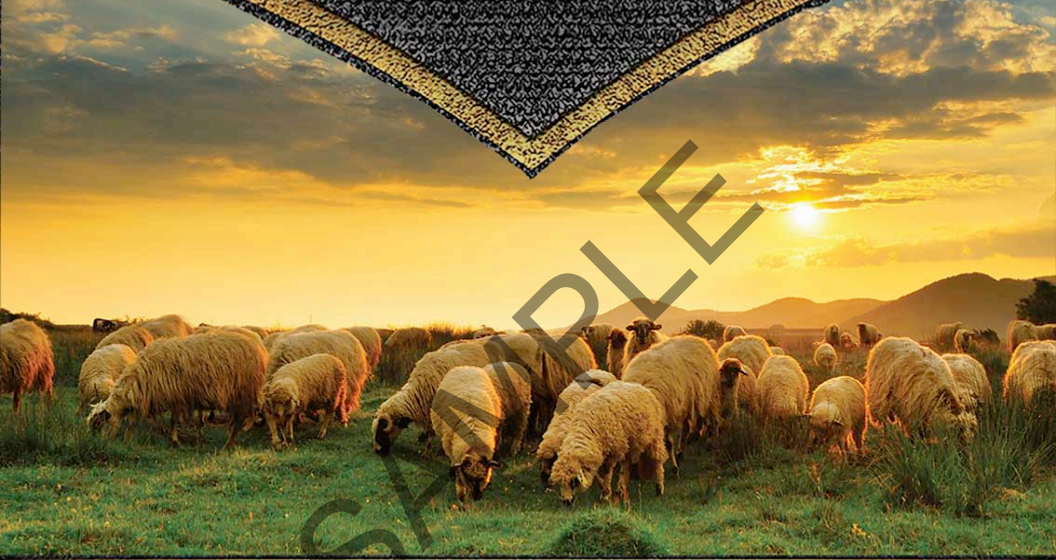


WAY OF LIFE
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SERIES



JEREMIAH
DAVID W. CLOUD

Jeremiah

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SAMPLE

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The *Way of Life Commentary Series* is designed in a unique format that can be used as commentaries (covering most verses) as well as teaching courses. We believe that preachers will find it easy to use the volumes for expository preaching. The commentaries are thorough, serious, broad, insightful, and practical, with an emphasis on application to the Christian life and ministry. Context is honored; words are defined; metaphors are explained; difficulties are tackled. The commentaries are packed with historical backgrounds and archaeological studies based on the author's personal research, which is reflected in books such as *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* and *Jews in Fighter Jets*.

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For the classroom setting, the teacher can use our review questions (plus his own, of course) to create appropriate sectional and final tests at the appropriate learning level.

SAMPLE

Introduction

The Prophet (Jer. 1:1)

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiyah. This is probably not the high priest who found the book of the law in the temple during Josiah's reign (2 Ki. 22:8). Hilkiyah was a common name that is mentioned 34 times in the Old Testament, and had Jeremiah's father been the high priest he probably would have been identified as such.

The name *Jeremiah* means "exalted of the Lord" or "appointed by the Lord."

Jeremiah was of the priests in Anathoth. This was a walled town about three miles northeast of Jerusalem which was allotted to the Levites by Joshua (Jos. 21:17-19). It is situated on a hill from which the Dead Sea is visible to the east and the mountains of Moab beyond. The site of the old town lies in desolation today. When I visited there in 2017, the only people in sight were sheep and goat herders. There are remnants of ancient walls, foundations, and wells. God had pledged that Anathoth would be judged because of the plot to kill Jeremiah (Jer. 11:21-23).

Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of the final five kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah.

The Application

The book of Jeremiah has countless applications, but a major one is to the preaching of God's Word in end-time apostasy. Following are some of the ways that the 21st century Bible preacher can relate to Jeremiah and his times:

He must stand alone for God in the midst of a rebellious generation.

He will have many troubles (e.g., loneliness, lies and slanders, threats, hatred, willful misunderstandings, temptations designed to cause him to stumble, Jer. 10:20).

He must deal with stubborn hearts and stiff necks.

He will have much discouragement and heartache.

In many cases, he will have a small following and little fruit.

He will have to deal with the fact that he is “in competition” with a multitude of false teachers who tell the people what they want to hear (2 Ti. 4:3-4).

He has no hope for better conditions in this present time; the Bible says the apostasy will only increase.

He will be tempted to compromise (Jer. 15).

He has a high calling to be God’s preacher in an evil generation.

He has the presence and help of God (Jer. 1:19).

He can draw nigh unto God and commune with God (Jer. 11:18-23; 12:1-6; 14:7-16).

He should not seek great things for himself in this present world (Jer. 45:5).

He has the promise of a bright future beyond this present time (Jer. 30-33). The prophecies of Christ’s kingdom apply to the New Testament believer, who is a king and priest and who will rule with Christ (Re 1:5-6).

Archaeological Findings Related to Jeremiah

Some spectacular artifacts from the time of Jeremiah have been unearthed which provide archaeological background to the biblical record.

Bullae (clay document seals, *bullā* is singular) have been found in the area of the royal palace bearing the names of people mentioned in the Bible who lived or worked in the palace just before it was burned by Nebuchadnezzar.

One of the seals is inscribed with “**Yahuchal Ben Shalemiah ben Shovi.**” This means Yehuchal son of Shelemiah son of Shovi, with Shovi being the grandfather. Yahuchal is spelled *Jehucal* and *Jucal* in the King James Bible. A Jewish prince in Zedekiah’s court, he was sent by the king to ask Jeremiah to pray for them (Jer. 37:3). Later Jehucal was one of four princes who called for Jeremiah’s death (Jer. 38:1-4).

Another seal bears the name of **Gemaryahu ben Shafan** (Gemariah the son of Shaphan), who is mentioned four times in Scripture (Jer. 36:10, 11, 12, 25). It was in Gemariah’s chamber in the temple that Baruch read the words of Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 36:10). Gemariah was one of three men who tried to dissuade the king from burning the scroll, “but he would not hear them” (Jer. 36:25).

Another bulla bears the name of **Azaryahu ben Hilkiyahu** (Azariah the son of Hilkiyah), who is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 9:11 as a member of the family of Zadok, high priest just before the Temple was destroyed.

Another seal contains the name of “**Elishama servant of the king,**” mentioned in Jeremiah 36:12.

Another seal is inscribed with “**Gedaliah son of Pashur,**” who is mentioned in Jer. 38:1.

A seal found in 1932 at Mizpah bears the inscription “**Yaazenyahu (Jaazaniah),** servant of the king.” In the Bible Jaazaniah is mentioned as a captain who survived the Babylonian invasion (2 Ki. 25:23).

In 1975, a seal was purchased by a prominent antiquities collector containing the inscription “[belonging] to **Berachyahu son of Neriyahu the scribe.**” This is a reference to Jeremiah’s scribe Baruch (Jer. 32:12; 36:4; 43:6; 45:1). The suffix “yahu” was a common epithet attached to names in Judah and means “blessed of Jehovah.” The authenticity of the seal has been questioned but not disproven, and it is on display at the Israel Museum.

In the 1930s an archaeological team led by J.L. Starkey discovered 21 letters written on pottery in the excavations of the ancient city of Lachish, which was one of the last cities to fall to the Babylonians in Jeremiah's day (Jer. 34:7). Most of the letters are written by Hoshai, a military officer stationed at an observation point not far from Lachish, and are addressed to his commanding officer, Yaosh. They are written in "perfect classical Hebrew." They mention Gemariah (Jer. 36:10), Jaazaniah (Jer. 35:3), Neriah Baruch (Jer. 36:4), and Mattaniah (King Zedekiah, 2 Ki. 24:17). Letter No. 3 mentions "a prophet" who was demoralizing the people by calling on them to submit to the Babylonians. This is eerily reminiscent of events in Jeremiah's life. See Jeremiah 38:1-4. The letters describe the same situation described in Jeremiah 34:7, that Lachish and Azekah were the last cities to fall to the Babylonians. "Striking confirmation of the fact that these two cities were among those still holding out is furnished by the Lachish Letters. Letter No. 4, written by an army officer at a military outpost to his superior officer at Lachish, says 'We are watching for the signals of Lachish according to all indications which my Lord has given, for we cannot see Azekah.' This letter not only shows us how Nebuchadnezzar's army was tightening its net around the land of Judah, but also evidences the close relationship between Lachish and Azekah, which are similarly linked in the book of Jeremiah" (J.P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*). The Lachish Letters are in Room 57 of the British Museum (Case 10).

Also at Lachish was found a seal with the inscription "of **Gedaliah who is over the house.**" Jeremiah gives much information about Gedaliah, who was appointed governor of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer. 40:6 - 41:18).

In 1955, a clay tablet from the *Babylonian Chronicle* was translated by D.J. Wiseman at the British Museum and found to contain a record of Nebuchadnezzar's second capture of

Jerusalem. Following is the Babylonian record of this event, which refers to kings Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, though not by name:

“In the seventh year, in the month Chislev, the king assembled his army and advanced on Hatti-land [Syria]. He encamped over against the city of the Judeans and conquered it on the second day of Adar [March 16, 597 B.C.]. He took the king [Jehoiachin] prisoner, and appointed in his stead a king after his own heart [Zedekiah]. He exacted heavy tribute and had it brought to Babylon” (Babylonian Chronicle for 605-594 B.C., British Museum, Room 55, Case 15, WA 21946).

This is powerful extra-biblical confirmation of 2 Kings 24:10-17.

There is also an amazing account in the Babylonian archives that describes Jehoiachin’s captivity in Babylon. It mentions him and his five sons as captives who received special rations. This record was translated by E. F. Weidner in the 1930s. The tablets were brought to Berlin during the German Oriental Society’s excavations of Babylon, the same excavations that discovered Babylon’s famous Ishtar Gate. The receipts pertaining to the rations given to Jehoiachin date to the 13th year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, which was 592 BC, five years after the fall of Jerusalem. The “Ration Dockets” are in Berlin’s Pergamon Museum. Following are some of the statements from the documents:

- 10 [sila of oil] to the king of Judah, Yaukin
- 2 1/2 sila to the offspring of Judah’s king
- 10 sila to Iakuukinu, the king of Judah’s son
- 2 1/2 sila for the five sons of the Judean king

The Babylonian archives state that Jehoiachin received 20 times more food rations than others that were listed, which corresponds to 2 Kings 25:27-30.

Overview of Jeremiah's Life and Times

The following dates are from Ussher. (Some other historians give slightly different dates.)

Jeremiah prophesied at least 44 years. It was 42 years from the 13th year of Josiah (608 BC) until the destruction of the temple (586 BC), and he continued to prophesy to the surviving remnant that went down to Egypt.

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet at an early age (Jer. 1:6). We don't know exactly how old he was, but he was a young man. When Jeremiah said, "I am a child," he didn't mean that he was a 16-year-old boy. He meant that he considered himself too young and inexperienced to be God's spokesman.

In 628 BC, Jeremiah began prophesying during the 13th year of the reign of Josiah (Jer. 1:2). This was the year after Josiah began to lead Judah in a revival. See 2 Ch. 34:1-7. Josiah began to seek the Lord in the eighth year of his reign, when he was 16, and he began to "purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places" in the twelfth year of his reign, when he was 20. As a true believer in Jehovah, Jeremiah would have been thrilled at and encouraged by at these events.

In 626, Nabopolassar conquered Babylon from Assyria. He was the father of Nebuchadnezzar. This was the beginning of the neo-Babylonian empire.

In 612, the great city of Nineveh was destroyed by an allied army of Babylonians and Medes led by Nabopolassar.

In 608 BC, Josiah was killed at the hands of the king of Egypt in the plain of Megiddo and was greatly mourned by Jeremiah (2 Ch. 35:20-25). This occurred when Pharaoh was taking his army through Israel to meet Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish. Josiah was 39 years old. We can see from Jeremiah's prophecies that Josiah's revival didn't reach the hearts of the people and didn't change the character of the nation. It was external only. It was a revival enforced by the

king rather than a revival involving true repentance on the part of the people themselves. See 2 Ch. 34:33, "And Josiah ... made all that were present in Israel to serve." Many of the priests were openly opposed to the revival (2 Ki. 23:9). The biblical record emphasizes that it was Josiah *himself*, rather than the people, who loved the Lord and had great zeal to obey the Lord. As a consequence, God did not turn from His anger toward Israel (2 Ki. 22:18-20; 23:25-26). Even a great many of the best churches today can be likened to Josiah's day. They are led by men who know the Lord and want to do right, and there is enthusiasm and some faithfulness to the services and such, but the spiritual reality is seen by examining the daily lives of average church members and what they truly love, and that reality is usually worldliness and spiritual lukewarmness.

Two of Josiah's sons reigned in his stead (Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim), but both were wicked. They did not follow their father's example and had not been touched by his revival. Like many of Israel's godly leaders, Josiah did not win his own children to the Lord.

In 609 BC, Jehoahaz (Shallum) reigned for three months until he was carried away to Egypt (2 Ch. 36:1-4).

In 609 BC, Jehoiakim (Eliakim) was made king and reigned 11 years (2 Ch. 36:4). Jeremiah had a lot of dealings with Jehoiakim. He is mentioned 23 times. Jehoiakim put the prophet Urijah to death (Jer. 26:20-23).

In 605 BC, Nabapolassar's military alliance (Babylonians, Medes, Persians) defeated Egypt and the Assyrians at the second Battle of Carchemish.

In 604 BC, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah was instructed to write down his prophecies at the hand of Baruch (Jer. 36:1-8). This was the 23rd year since Jeremiah had begun prophesying (Jer. 25:3). This was the year that Nebuchadnezzar came to the throne of Babylon (Jer. 25:1).

In 603 BC, in the fifth year of Jehoiakim's reign, the king cut up the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 36:9-26).

In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and took Jehoiakim captive (2 Ch. 36:5-7). Jeremiah had prophesied that he would be "buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. 22:18-19), and his dead body would be cast out in the day to the heat and in the night to the frost (Jer. 36:30). 2 Ch. 36:6 says Nebuchadnezzar "bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon," but it doesn't say he did actually carry him to Babylon. Apparently Jehoiakim was killed while still in Jerusalem and his body was desecrated. Josephus says Jehoiakim was slain by Nebuchadnezzar, who "commanded his body to be thrown before the walls, without any burial."

In 597 BC, Jehoiachin (Coniah, Jeconiah) reigned for three months and was taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Ki. 24:8-16). This was the great deportation when Daniel was carried away (Da. 1:1-6) and the prophet Ezekiel (Eze. 1:2) and Mordecai's great grandfather, Kish (Est. 2:5-6). It must have been a shocking thing for Jeremiah to witness the wholesale captivity of most of Israel's great and skilled men and the robbing of Jerusalem's treasures. Later, God told Jeremiah that these were taken away "for their good" (Jer. 24:5).

In 597, Zedekiah (Mattaniah) began to reign over Judah for 11 years (2 Ki. 24:17-18). Zedekiah is mentioned 48 times in Jeremiah. He was a weak, vacillating king. Jeremiah prophesied to him to repent and submit to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:12), but he refused.

In 591, in the sixth year of Zedekiah's reign, Ezekiel was shown the idolatry that was practiced in the temple (Eze. 8).

In about 588 BC, Jeremiah tried to return to his home in Benjamin but was arrested and imprisoned in a dungeon for some days and then released to the prison court (Jer.

37:11-21). He was then placed in a more terrible dungeon for some time until he was released at the command of the king (Jer. 38:1-13).

In 588 BC, Nebuchadnezzar began the final siege of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was shut up in the city and experienced the famine (Jer. 39:1; La. 1:11, 19).

In 586 BC, Jeremiah witnessed the destruction of the temple and the city (Jer. 39:2-8). Nebuchadnezzar killed King Zedekiah's sons, put out the king's eyes, and carried him captive to Babylon.

Jeremiah was released from prison by the Babylonians and chose to remain with the remnant of Jews who stayed in the land (Jer. 39:13-14).

When the remnant refused to obey God's Word that they remain in the land and determined, instead, to go to Egypt, Jeremiah accompanied them (Jer. 43:1-7). In Egypt, he disappears from history.

Jeremiah's Persecutions

Jeremiah was persecuted throughout his career. Even after the destruction of Jerusalem, the remnant of the people resisted him and spoke angrily to him (Jer. 42-43).

Jer. 11:18-23 - The men of Jeremiah's hometown, Anathoth, plotted to kill him.

Jer. 12:6 - Jeremiah's relatives tried to deceive him and harm him.

Jer. 18:18-23 - The people plotted against Jeremiah and sought to put him to death.

Jer. 20:1-3 - Pashur smote Jeremiah and put him in stocks.

Jer. 26:7-24 - The priests, prophets, and people tried to kill Jeremiah.

Jer. 28:1-17 - Hananiah the prophet broke the yoke off of Jeremiah's neck.

Jer. 36:22-26 - King Jehoiakim cut and burned Jeremiah's prophecies and sought to arrest him.

Jer. 37:11-21 Jeremiah was put into prison.

Jer. 38:1-13 Jeremiah was put into the deep pit where he sank into the mire.

Jeremiah's Prayers

We are allowed to listen in to many of Jeremiah's intimate conversations with God. Jeremiah was one of the loneliest of the prophets from a human standpoint. He was not allowed to take a wife, and we don't know of any close friends with whom he could share his troubles. But he could say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee*" (Ps. 73:25), and, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up" (Ps. 27:10).

Jer. 1:4-10

Jer. 4:1-13

Jer. 11:18-22

Jer. 12:1-6

Jer. 14:7-22

Jer. 15:1-21

Jer. 16:19-21

Jer. 17:13-18

Jer. 18:19-23

Jer. 20:7-18

Jer. 32:16-35

These are divinely-inspired glimpses into the relationship between God and His prophets. We know that all of the prophets conversed with God, but the conversations recorded in Scripture are not there by happenstance. They

are included in the canon of Scripture to instruct all of God's people.

Jeremiah in the New Testament

Jeremiah the prophet is mentioned twice in Matthew (Mt. 2:17; 16:14).

Jeremiah is quoted directly or alluded to about 40 times. Following are some examples:

Mt. 2:17-18 - Jer. 31:15

Mt. 21:13 - Jer. 7:11

Ac. 15:16 - Jer. 12:15

1 Co. 1:31 - Jer. 9:24

Heb. 8:12 - Jer. 31:34

Heb. 10:16 - Jer. 31:33-34

Re. 18:2 - Jer. 51:8

Jeremiah at the Hands of Textual Critics

Like most other parts of the Bible, Jeremiah has suffered at the hands of liberal critics.

One tactic has been to correct Jeremiah with the Greek Septuagint. B.H. Carroll presents this view in *An Interpretation of the English Bible*:

“There are more difficulties in the study of the text than in the study of almost any other book of the Bible. In the third century BC a Greek translation was made in Egypt by many scholars from the original Jewish manuscripts that they might have the Scriptures in Greek. That translation was called the Septuagint. From this it appears that the book of Jeremiah has more corruptions in the text than any other book.”

The truth is that it is the Septuagint that is filled with corruptions. It is an *extremely* poor translation which has zero authority over the Hebrew.

Liberal critics have torn Jeremiah apart as they have Isaiah, claiming that only portions were written by Jeremiah. This is summarized by Arno Gaebelein in the *Annotated Bible*:

“The critical school has made much out of these apparent difficulties and the disorder and unchronological character of the book. Therefore Jeremiah has suffered just as much in the dissecting room of the destructive critics as Isaiah and Moses. Thus Peake in his commentary on Jeremiah uses nine symbolic letters to show which is which.

J. Which stands for the prophecies of which Jeremiah is most likely the author.

S. This stands for certain supplementers.

JS. This stands for the words of Jeremiah worked over by a supplementer; nobody knows who he was.

B. This means Baruch and his production.

BS. This means that Baruch's words were supplemented by some more unknown supplementers.

R. This stands for Redactor, whoever he was.

I. Here we have an unknown author who, according to the critics, wrote chapter 10:1-6.

K. Here is another unknown gentleman, the author of 17:19, etc.

E. This letter denotes extracts from 2 Kings.

“It is of little interest to quote the ramblings of Duhm, Ryssell, Hitzig, Renan and others about the authorship and compilation of Jeremiah. Not one of these scholars agrees. They have theories but no certainties. How simple it is to believe the beginning and the end of this book, that here are ‘the words of Jeremiah.’ And though King Jehoiakim tried to destroy these words, they still live and they will live on in our days, in spite of the successors of the wicked king, the professors of apostasy, who are trying to give Christendom an abridged Bible” (Gaebelein).

Outline of Jeremiah

I. Introduction (Jer. 1:1-3)

II. God's call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-19)

III. Warnings of approaching judgment on Judah (Jer. 2-38)

- God pleads with and warns Judah (Jer. 2-5)
- God promises destruction (Jer. 6)
- Jeremiah preaches at the gate of the temple (Jer. 7:1 - 8:17)
- Jeremiah weeps (Jer. 8:18 - 9:2)
- God pronounces judgment (Jer. 9:3-26)
- Idolatry and judgment (Jer. 10)
- The broken covenant (Jer. 11:1-17)
- A plot to kill Jeremiah (Jer. 11:18-23)
- Jeremiah questions God (Jer. 12)
- The linen girdle (Jer. 13:1-11)
- The bottles of wine (Jer. 13:12-14)
- A final warning (Jer. 13:15-27)
- The prophet's conversation with God (Jer. 14-15)
- The Lord takes away His peace (Jer. 16:1-13)
- The return of Israel (Jer. 16:14-21)
- Man's terrible condition (Jer. 17:1-13)
- Jeremiah prays to the LORD (Jer. 17:14-18)
- The sabbath (Jer. 17:19-27)
- The potter and the clay (Jer. 18:1-17)
- Another plot against Jeremiah (Jer. 18:18-23)
- The broken pot (Jer. 19)
- Pashur's false prophecy and judgment (Jer. 20:1-6)
- Jeremiah's complaint (Jer. 20:7-18)
- Jerusalem will be destroyed (Jer. 21)
- Prophecies against the kings of Judah (Jer. 22)
- The Righteous Branch (Jer. 23:1-8)
- The lying prophets (Jer. 23:9-40)
- Good and bad figs (Jer. 24)
- The Seventy Year Captivity (Jer. 25:1-14)
- The cup of wrath for the nations (Jer. 25:15-38)
- Jeremiah on trial for his life (Jer. 26)
- The yokes for the nations (Jer. 27)
- Hananiah's false prophecy and judgment (Jer. 28)
- Jeremiah's letter to the captives in Babylon (Jer. 29)
- The New Covenant (Jer. 30-31)
- Jeremiah purchases property in Anathoth (Jer. 32)
- The Righteous Branch (Jer. 33)

The broken covenant (Jer. 34)

God's message to the Rechabites (Jer. 35)

The writing of the prophecy and the burning of it by
Jehoiakim (Jer. 36)

The imprisonments of Jeremiah (Jer. 37-38)

IV. The destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. 39)

V. The experiences of Jeremiah after the destruction (Jer.
40-45)

VI. Prophecies to the Gentile nations (Jer. 46-51)

VII. The destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. 52)

SAMPLE

Jeremiah 1 God's Call

Jeremiah 1:1-3 Preliminary facts about Jeremiah's life and ministry

We dealt with these verses in the introduction.

The emphasis is on “the word of the LORD” (Jer. 1:2). This appears 54 times in Jeremiah. Either he spoke God's word, or he didn't. There is no middle ground. The Hebrew prophets claimed to speak the very words of God, and their messages in their entirety must be accepted as such or rejected. Having studied the Bible for 45 years at the time of this writing, I have found countless reasons to believe that it is the infallible Word of God.

Jeremiah 1:4-10 God's call of Jeremiah

There is a clear, divine call to the prophetic and preaching ministry, and we see it throughout Scripture. God called Abel (Lu. 11:51), Enoch, Abraham, Joshua, Deborah, Samuel, David, Solomon, and all of the writing prophets. He called John the Baptist, the apostles, Paul (Ga. 1:15), and Timothy (1 Ti. 1:17). In fact, every true believer is “called” (Re. 17:14). Every believer is an ambassador of Christ (2 Co. 5:20) and a priest (1 Pe. 2:5).

God's call to Jeremiah was personal and unmistakable. Though New Testament preachers do not hear the voice of God in the same way that the writing prophets heard His voice, they still experience a personal and clear call of God.

The prophets knew Jehovah God personally. They walked and talked with God. We see this very clearly in Jeremiah. From the time of his call, Jeremiah communes with God and reasons with God. His conversations with God are woven through the prophecy (Jer. 1:4-10; 4:10-12; 11:18-23; 12:1-6;

14:1-22; 15:1-21; 16:19-21; 17:13-18; 18:19-23; 20:7-18; 32:16-35).

God fashioned Jeremiah in the womb (Jer. 1:5).

David described this in detail in Ps. 139:13-16. David said that he was fashioned according to a preexisting divine plan. Conception is in God's hand (Ge. 4:1; 29:31; 30:22; Ru. 4:13). And the forming of the child in the womb is God's personal work. There are biological laws, but the Bible teaches that God is intimately involved in these things.

In the beginning of creation, both the man and the woman were personally and individually fashioned by God (Ge. 2). He formed the vast starry universe with His Word, but He fashioned man and woman with His hands. The Bible teaches us that God continues to personally fashion individuals in the womb.

This means that abortion is murder. That child does not belong to the mother; the child belongs to the Creator. A woman is not free to do with her body as she pleases because she is a created being and is accountable to the Creator, and further, the infant in her womb is a separate body and a separate individual.

This means that I must accept myself as God's creation. The knowledge that I am formed in the womb by God is fundamental to a proper "worldview" and to a right understanding of oneself. My appearance, my personality, my talents were all pre-determined by God in His divine purpose and plan. I must avoid the pitfall of being proud of what I am, as well as the pitfall of despising what I am. Perla Ovitz (d. 2001), the youngest of a family of seven Jewish dwarfs, had a right outlook. She said, "I've never fantasized about a good fairy coming to double my height. Being a dwarf is no punishment. The difference in height does not diminish my pleasure. Our life is as worthwhile as anyone else's ... Naturally we'd like to be no different than you, but if this is the shape God destined for us, we have no complaints against Him" (*Giants: The Dwarfs of Auschwitz*, Kindle loc. 299, 2972).

God knew Jeremiah before he existed (Jer. 1:5).

This is a fundamental statement of God's omniscience. God knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10; Ac. 15:18). God's Word is forever settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89). Christ's death was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pe. 1:20). He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Ac. 2:23).

Every believer is foreknown by God (Ro. 8:29). Election is based on God's foreknowledge (1 Pe. 1:2).

God sanctified Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5).

"Sanctified" means "set apart for God's purpose." The Hebrew word "qadash" is also translated "holy" (Ex. 20:8), "hallow" (Ex. 20:11), "consecrate" (Ex. 28:3). "Qadash" is used 26 times in in Exodus to describe the setting apart of the Tabernacle and all of its articles for God's service.

God has a perfect will for every believer (Ro. 12:1-8). There is a gifting and calling, but it must be sought after and surrendered to. "To see our calling, to accept it, to honour it, that is the truly godly and noble life! Every man is born to realise some purpose. Find that purpose out, and fulfil it if you would lovingly serve God. We find no difficulty in persuading a man that he is a Jeremiah or a Daniel, at any rate that, under certain circumstances, he might easily have turned out a Hannibal or a Wellington. The difficulty, on the contrary, is to persuade a man that the lowliest lot, as well as the highest, is the appointment of God; that door keeping is a promotion in the Divine gift; and that to light a lamp may be as surely a call of God as to found an empire or to rule a world" (Joseph Parker).

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet unto the nations (Jer. 1:5, 10).

Like Isaiah (Isa. 14:26; 18:3; 34:1-2; 45:22), Jeremiah's ministry extended far beyond Israel and Judah. God is the God of the entire world, and His prophets have authority to speak to all nations.

In the church age, God is speaking to all nations by His ambassadors (2 Co. 5:20). Christ has all authority in heaven and earth, and He has sent His representatives into all the world to preach the gospel (Mt. 28:18-20). Those who receive Christ's representatives, receive Christ, and those who reject His representatives, reject Christ (Lu. 10:16). Those who reject Christ, reject God the Father (Joh. 13:20).

God's prophecies of judgment that He gave by the Hebrew prophets like Jeremiah will fall on the nations in the day of the Lord. The Hebrew prophets did not speak in vain. Though they have been largely ignored by the nations for over 2,500 years, they will not be ignored forever. Every word is from Almighty God and will be fulfilled.

God exhorted Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6-7).

God did not accept Jeremiah's excuse that he was a child. He instructed him, "Say not, I am a child." When God calls an individual to a ministry, there is no acceptable excuse not to obey. God's answer to every excuse and every complaint is that He has called and He will enable, so get to work! Compare Exodus 4:10-14.

God sent Jeremiah ("I have sent thee," Jer. 1:7).

Preaching is not sitting; it is going. God wants to speak to men, and preachers are His instruments.

Every New Testament believer is sent as an ambassador of Christ to preach the gospel to every person (Mr. 16:15; 2 Co. 5:20).

God encouraged Jeremiah (Jer. 1:8).

There are many fears in life and ministry (2 Co. 7:5), but the knowledge that God is with me is the victory over every fear. The spirit of fear is not of God, and He gives power, love, and a sound mind to those who seek it (2 Ti. 1:7).

God put His words in Jeremiah's mouth (Jer. 1:9).

This is the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture. God did not merely give general ideas to the prophets; He gave

words. Every word of God is an essential part of God's revelation to man. Compare 1 Co. 2:12-13.

The Bible translator needs to take every word of the Hebrew and Greek text into consideration. God's people need a verbal translation, not a "dynamic equivalency" or a paraphrase such as The New Living Bible, Today's English Version, and The Message.

The child of God needs to take heed to every word of God. When reading and studying, consider every word. When memorizing, carefully memorize every word. When meditating, weigh every word.

Jeremiah 1:11-16 The first visions

God's messages to Jeremiah begin with two visions. This is still part of God's call. The two visions summarize the message God called Jeremiah to proclaim.

The vision of the rod of an almond tree (Jer. 1:11-12)

This is interpreted by the Lord Himself. It signifies that Jeremiah's warnings were soon to be fulfilled. The almond tree was the first tree in the season to bud. Like the appearance of an almond blossom heralded the coming of spring, God's Word to Jeremiah heralded the coming of judgment. It was only 42 years from the time Jeremiah began prophesying until the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar.

The vision of a seething pot with its face toward the north (Jer. 1:13-16)

Again the Lord interprets the metaphor. It signifies the horde of Babylon that will exercise God's judgment on Israel for her sin.

The kings aligned with Nebuchadnezzar will sit on thrones at the gates of Jerusalem and other cities of Judah after they are conquered. This tells us what happened in 586 BC at the fall of Jerusalem.

The judgment will come because Israel had forsaken the Lord for false gods (Jer. 1:16). The fundamental sin was forsaking

the Lord. Instead of loving and obeying Him and seeking and serving Him, Israel wickedly and foolishly and cruelly forsook Him. The root sin was not merely breaking God's laws; it was the refusal to love God which is the first duty of man (De. 6:5). This is a major theme of the book. Nine times in Jeremiah God says His people had forsaken Him (Jer. 1:16; 2:13, 17, 19; 5:7; 15:6; 16:11; 17:13; 19:4).

Jeremiah 1:17-19 God's final exhortation to Jeremiah

This is the conclusion to God's call of the prophet.

"Gird up thy loins": Jeremiah was to prepare himself for the ministry. He was to be ready to go, ready to serve. To gird up the loins was to gather up one's robe and tie it at the waist so that one could engage in running or other activities without hindrance (2 Ki. 4:29; 9:1). It is used to signify readiness to serve God, diligence, busyness (Lu. 12:35). It is the opposite of laziness and lukewarmness.

"Arise": The will of God is not found by sitting and waiting, but by engaging in the Lord's service right now and following Him step by step. God is looking for those who will "arise"! He is looking for those who go and *labor* in His great harvest (Lu. 10:2).

"speak unto them all that I command thee": Jeremiah was required to speak to whomsoever God instructed him to speak to, whether pauper or king.

"Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them": Sinners who reject God's Word show it on their faces, and it can be very intimidating. God warns Jeremiah that if he is dismayed at people's angry faces, God will confound him. The preacher who fears man loses the power and blessing of God.

"I have made thee a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls": God promised to give Jeremiah the strength and backbone and courage to perform his difficult ministry of reproving sin and error.