

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



Volume 38

March 2018

Number 8

Jeremiah: The Man and His Message

By Terrance Brownlow-Dindy, Sr.

In an arena of religiosity defiled by extra-biblical innovations and tainted by non-Scriptural “ideals,” existing in a nation that is severely crippled and plunging headlong toward total incapacitation due to a decline in decency and a breakdown of morality, any man who would stand for the truth, of necessity, must possess a “double portion” of courage. That man must maintain firm conviction in a world of subjectivism, fervent compassion in a society of self-destruction, and fail-proof consistency amid a community of capriciousness.

Jeremiah the Man

Six hundred twenty-six years before Christ, that man was Jeremiah, the prophet of God, and that land of spiritual lifelessness was the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

By the latter half of the seventh century BC, the Nation of Judah had become an object of God’s wrath. She was destined for destruction as a result of her stubborn infidelity (Jer. 2:20, 25; 3:1-2). Throughout history, God had likened Israel unto a wife (cf. Hosea; Isaiah 62:5, etc.), but at this point, Judah was on the verge of becoming a “bride put away” as had her sister to the north (Jer. 3:6-10). However, Jehovah is a God who has never taken pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezk. 33:11), but desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). He wants none to perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Thus, God commissioned a man to convey a message of repentance to the apostate children of Judah. The man selected was Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah (Jer. 1:1).

Though the message that Jeremiah was instructed to preach to the idolatrous inhabitants of Judah can be simply stated: “repent and I will relent” (cf. Jer. 18:7-8), there was nothing at all simple about the task the prophet was delegated to perform. The chore set before Jeremiah was one which required a man of unquestionable quality – a man who in fact possessed each of the previously mentioned characteristics: courage, conviction, compassion, and consistency. Again, Jeremiah was the man.

As servants of the Most High today, who too are faced with the challenge of presenting the message of God’s conditional saving grace to a shameless, impenitent world that seems to be adamant in its rejection of the truth, Jeremiah becomes to us a source of adoration, inspiration, and emulation.

Courage

As true disciples, proclaimers of the truth, and members of a growing religious minority, we have to possess the courage of Jeremiah the man. Being a worshiper of the one and only true God exclusively, Jeremiah too was in the minority among his contem-



Our New Logo

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poraries. Though he recognized himself to be “a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole land” (Jer. 15:10), Jeremiah boldly preached the truth without wavering.

Conviction

Perhaps in no other place in Scripture do we see conviction so deeply rooted in a man as we see in the Book of Jeremiah. Upon being scorned and mocked by those to whom he preached, Jeremiah vowed to speak no more in the name of the Lord, only to realize and to affirm, “His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not” (Jer. 20:9). How we need that kind of conviction in pulpits today!

Compassion

Jeremiah is often identified as the weeping prophet due to his anguish concerning the imminent destruction of the children of Judah. Verses such as Jeremiah 4:19 reveal to us the amount of compassion Jeremiah felt for his people. There he laments, “O my soul, my soul! I am pained in my very heart! My heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.” As Christians, we likewise need to lament for those

who are suffering—even when that suffering is self-induced.

Consistency

Jeremiah’s consistency in delivering God’s message should be noted and imitated. Jeremiah preached forty plus years to a people who refused to heed his words, and he never went beyond nor stopped short of what God wanted him to say. In a time when the word of God is often being diluted for the sake of satisfying “itching ears,” the consistency of Jeremiah, a true man of God, needs to be proclaimed loudly and clearly!

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Special Contributions: In Honor of James Earnhardt, member of 1st graduating class in 1971 (Nettie Jo Earnhardt); Forest Park church of Christ Scholarship Fund.

*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month’s financial statement.

The Harvester

Published Monthly
Florida School of Preaching
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803
(863) 683-4043

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Jeremiah's Message

Not a few Gospel preachers determined to “declare the whole counsel of God,” even when it required preaching negatively, have been characterized by liberal and ecumenical elements as harsh, intolerant, unloving, cold, and sectarian. If this is an accurate assessment of those who stand for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing more than the truth, then some “well-knowns” of the intolerant, unloving, and sectarian genre of Gospel preachers would include men like Jesus Christ (first and foremost), John the Immerser, Noah, Elijah, and the man who is the subject of this article, Jeremiah.

“Negative” Content

Often Jeremiah is deemed “the weeping prophet,” which is clearly a designation denoting his loving, compassionate character. How do we reconcile that description of Jeremiah with the predominantly negative message that he was commissioned to preach? The fact of the matter is being a preacher who truly cares for the souls of others always entails preaching a message that has some negative aspects in addition to the positive. Jeremiah’s message to the children of Israel residing in the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the seventh century BC, in fact, was two-thirds negative. Jeremiah was appointed by God to verbally “build and plant” (positives), but only after obeying the commands to “root out ... pull down ... destroy ... and to throw down” (Jer. 1:10).

Jeremiah’s assignment to “root out” included his God-given message to warn Judah’s disloyal inhabitants to “circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart ... lest His fury come forth like fire and burn so that no one can quench it ...” (Jer. 4:4). Now notice Judah’s response to such negative preaching: “neither will evil come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine” (Jer. 5:12). The prophet’s duty to “pull down” warranted his preaching negative proclamations like “withhold your foot from being unshod” (Jer. 2:25a), a message prohibiting unauthorized “religious liberties.” The people’s response to this message was, “No! For I have loved aliens, and after them I will go” (Jer. 2:25b). His responsibility to “destroy and throw down” involved Jeremiah’s admonishing Judah, “Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them” (Jer. 25:6). Behold yet again God’s commentary on Judah’s response: “you have not listened to me” (Jer. 25:7).

“Positive” Content

Now that we have taken a brief glimpse at Jeremiah’s negative preaching, let us look at some of the positive. Keep in mind, the liberal element would have us to believe that the response to “positive preaching” is more favorable. The Book of Jeremiah, however, proves otherwise. Jeremiah’s task to “build and plant” included relaying the Lord’s message of the eighteenth chapter where God says, “The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it” (Jer. 18:7-8). Even with a message as positive and promising as this, the response of the Israelites is no different. Notice their reply: “That is hopeless! So we will everyone obey the dictates of his evil heart” (Jer. 18:12).

The reality is this: If the message of truth is being presented to those who have hardened their hearts against it, such as did the children of Israel in the days of Jeremiah, then whether the truth proclaimed is of a positive or negative nature is of little concern. They will reject it! Nothing at all is “negative” regarding the Biblical doctrines of water immersion and acapella congregational singing, yet the majority of the religious world reject these doctrines, and give those who adamantly promote them derogatory labels such as “book worshiping legalists.” Again, Jeremiah’s message contained negatives such as “do not listen to the words of your prophets who ... prophesy a lie to you” (Jer. 27:16). It included positives such as his message to those who desired to flee to Egypt, “If you will still remain in this land, then I will build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up” (Jer. 42:10). In either case, the response of the people was consistently: “We will not listen to you!” (Jer. 44:16). The response of the hard hearted to God’s message today is no different. Thus, let us not become discouraged when, like Jeremiah, we preach the message that God bids us.

Conclusion

Information concerning no other prophet is more readily available to us as is that involving Jeremiah. The Holy Spirit has seen to it that we have plenty of information concerning Jeremiah the man and his message. It would do us all well to learn from this prophet’s courage, conviction, compassion, and consistency. Thank God for a man like Jeremiah.

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