

# Jeremiah (1): Hear the Word of the Lord

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*(The Message of Jeremiah)*

## I. Introduction

- A. This is a time of excitement for freshman beginning in a “brave new world”
  - 1. It is a time of great adventure— a time of freedom, promise and exploration
    - a. We moved Angelynn; she stood impatiently like “*You can leave now!*”
    - b. But she called 4 times before we got out of town! Adventures are scary!
  - 2. Colleges try to make the transition easier by offering a host of information
    - a. *The Yale Herald* had an article on dozens of freshman workshops
    - b. There were seminars on “*College and Alcohol*” or “*College and Sex*”  
“*There are no such workshops on what they came to Yale for— academics*”
    - c. The article suggested freshmen are actually told too many different things.
      - 1) Each departments gives conflicting, contradictory, confusing advice
      - 2) Title of article– “*Freshmen Hear Too Many Voices in Their Heads*”
- B. I think that is a good metaphor for our lives today— we hear too many voices.
  - 1. We live in an information age that constantly bombards us with messages.
    - a. When I was a kid, we planned our evenings had to fit inside 7:00-11:00
      - 1) Dad had to watch news– Walter Cronkite at 6:30 & local at 11:00
      - 2) Dad now gets 6 24-hour cable news shows... and TiVo’s several!
    - b. There are 24-hr weather, sports, business & entertainment news channels
      - 1) All have websites which will email or IM headlines to you 27/7
      - 2) We know instantly what market, Yankees, Congress or Britney does
    - c. We hear too many voices from movies, TV, music, newspapers and books
    - d. Like the college freshman at Yale, we hear too many voices in our heads
  - 2. We don’t just hear—we listen and are changed by the voices we hear
    - a. Why does the church so often look so similar to the culture around it?
      - 1) Why is the **divorce rate** among Christians the same as in the culture?
      - 2) Why do church people have as many **extramarital affairs** as not?
      - 3) Why are we as likely to pursue **material success**... and ignore **poor**?
      - 4) Why do many of us accept **homosexuality** and **abortion** as choice?
    - b. We, we hear this cacophony of voices from our culture and our world.
  - 3. To his world and our own, Jeremiah declares, “*Hear the word of the Lord!*”

- C. What do you picture in your mind when you think of a prophet?
1. Do you picture a strange man on a street corner predicting the coming end?
    - a. I don't know about street corners, but Jeremiah did predict end of Judah
    - b. And he was marginalized as strange and his message was largely ignored
    - c. And when Judah stopped ignoring him, they started trying to kill him
  2. Jeremiah preached to generation of God's people too wrapped up in world
    - a. It was a time of great political upheaval and grabs for power.
    - b. It was a time of great prosperity and poverty... and great uncertainty.
    - c. Judah pointed at her status as the chosen, but did not live chosen lives.
  3. Jeremiah challenged their world over and over with three related phrases—
    - a. "*Hear the word of the Lord*" appears some **18 times** in his book
    - b. His declaration "*The word of the Lord came unto me*" appears **50 times**
    - c. Jeremiah declares "*This is what the Lord says...*" more than **150 times**

## II. The Life and Times of Jeremiah

- A. To understand Jeremiah's message, we need to see something of his world
1. Jeremiah was born in final years of **Manasseh**, king of Judah
    - a. Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah, but he rejected his father and God
    - b. Manasseh moved Judah from God; he restored worship of Baal, Asherah
      - 1) He used Temple as pagan shrine and sacrificed children to Molech
      - 2) His was a reign of terror and blood (**2 Ki 21:16**) (*Tradition- Isaiah*)  
 "*shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end*"
    - c. Manasseh ruled 53 years; God's Temple was in ruins and Law was lost
  2. Manasseh's grandson **Josiah** became king at 8 yrs old after Amon murder
    - a. In his 8<sup>th</sup> year, Josiah began to seek God, and began to dismantle idols
    - b. In his 18<sup>th</sup> year, Josiah began to completely restore the Temple of God
      - 1) During construction, the Book of Law was found and read to king
      - 2) Josiah pledged himself to follow the Covenant along with his people
  3. Jeremiah was called as a prophet in 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah's reign (**Jer 1:2**)
    - a. That's 5 years *after* Josiah sought God, but 5 years *before* Law was found
      - 1) Jeremiah must have been a powerful influence on the great king
      - 2) But little [maybe none] of the book is addressed written to Josiah.
    - b. Jeremiah's work really begins after Josiah died and Judah collapses.

- B. Josiah died in battle with Pharaoh Necho in 609 BC at the Battle of Mediggo
1. He was trying to prevent Egypt from aiding Assyria in war with Babylon
    - a. Assyria was ancient enemy; Egypt threatened to invade (*eventually does*)
    - b. This crushing defeat at Mediggo would give its name to *Armageddon*
  2. The decline of nation Judah following the death of Josiah is startling.
    - a. In 609, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Assyria-Egypt at Battle of Carchemish
      - 1) This ended Assyria and sent Necho running back to Egypt in defeat
      - 2) He took Jerusalem & removed popular King Jehoahaz (*3 month rule*)
      - 3) Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, was placed on the throne by Necho
    - b. In 606, with Egypt's power broken, Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem
      - 1) This was the invasion in which Daniel and his friends were deported
      - 2) Judah became a vassal state of Babylon under oppressive taxation
    - c. In 597, Nebuchadnezzar again invaded Jerusalem to enforce his rule
      - 1) King Jeconiah was taken prisoner (18 yrs old, ruled for 3 months)
      - 2) Zedekiah was placed on throne as a puppet and heavily taxed king
      - 3) The temple was looted and the nobility was banished to Babylon
    - d. In 586, Zedekiah rebelled and Nebuchadnezzar had finally had enough
      - 1) Jerusalem was destroyed, Zedekiah's family killed, he was blinded
      - 2) The people of Judah were related to Babylon and Israel ceased to be

### III. Conclusion

- A. We sang "*These Are the Days of Elijah.*" Well, these were days of Jeremiah!
1. Days of **TURMOIL**: There was great geopolitical upheaval and transition
    - a. Jeremiah began his ministry under the most righteous of all kings
      - 1) Most told Israel "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength*" (**Deut 6:5**)
      - 2) The only person in scripture said to do that was Josiah (**2 Ki 23:25**)
    - b. Jeremiah began with Judah's greatest king; he ended with no Judah at all
    - c. Each king after Josiah was more inept and more unholy than one before
  2. Days of **APOSTASY**: Josiah's reforms changed policy, not hearts of Judah
    - a. The idols of earlier generations were simply added to worship of God
    - b. There was great outward religiosity— did all the sacrifices and feasts
    - c. They took pride in God's Temple; they did not follow God's covenant

3. Days of **IMMORALITY**: Paganism wasn't just false way of doing religion
    - a. It was a false lifestyle, and Judah's paganism led to her immorality
    - b. There is a connection of following idols and living immorality (**7:9**)  
*Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known"*
  4. Days of **PRIVILEGE**: Judah's rulers acted as if nothing were wrong
    - a. What does Jehoahaz do after Josiah died? Build a new palace (**Jer 22**)
    - b. The wealthy class see only wealth while the world falls apart around them
- B. Some maybe the days of Jeremiah are not that different from our own
1. Are these "*days of great trial, of famine & darkness & sword?*" like we sang
    - a. Our nation isn't on the brink of collapse! *That's what Judah thought!*
    - b. Our is a nation with deep Christian heritage. *Judah had a great heritage!*
    - c. OK, so there is a bit of immortality. *If it offended God then, it still does!.*
    - d. God has blessed with such prosperity! *He can take it away just as fast!*
  2. So to his world and ours, Jeremiah declares, "*Hear the word of the Lord*"
    - a. Judah needed to stop hearing other voices— idols, nations, prosperity
    - b. They needed to hear God and recommit to following his covenant
      - 1) **Factoid**: Jeremiah's word "*hear*" is also Hebrew word for "*obey*."
      - 2) Same works in Greek; *akouo* (*our word "acoustics"*) means "*obey*"
  3. We aren't just to hear the word of the Lord... we must listen and follow!
- C. The danger we face in Jeremiah is to think he isn't really speaking to us
1. But Jeremiah is used to that; that's what his original audience did!
    - a. Jeremiah warns Judah, "*If you don't repent, you be taken captive*"
      - 1) In 597, Jeconiah and 10,000 subjects are taken captive to Babylon
      - 2) Jeremiah's are proven true! What will Zedekiah and his people do?
    - b. Nothing. God told Jehoichin he would be punished, and he was1 so?
      - 1) God tells Ezekiel (Babylon) what they say in Jerusalem (**11:15**, NLT)
      - 2) Jeremiah's warnings were someone else; we are are the faithful ones!
  2. Jeremiah is speaking to us when he says, "*Hear the word of the Lord!*"
    - a. We must not listen to the contrary voices of our culture and our world.
    - b. We must realize that those voices are calling us away from who we are.
  3. We are the people of God, and so we must hear the word of the Lord!