

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Jeremiah 1-2

10/8/14

Bible Study Notes - Chapter 1

1 The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. 2 The word of the LORD came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, 3 and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.

1:1-2 After King Solomon's death, the united kingdom of Israel had split into rival northern and southern kingdoms. The northern kingdom was called Israel; the southern, Judah. Jeremiah was from Anathoth, four miles north of Jerusalem in the southern kingdom. He lived and prophesied during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah. This was a chaotic time politically, morally, and spiritually. As Babylon, Egypt, and Assyria battled for world supremacy, Judah found itself caught in the middle of the triangle. Although Jeremiah prophesied for 40 years, he never saw his people heed his words and turn from their sins.

The Call of Jeremiah

4 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." 6 "Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." 7 But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. 9 Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." 11 The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied. 12 The LORD said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled." 13 The word of the LORD came to me again: "What do you see?" "I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north," I answered. 14 The LORD said to me, "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. 15 I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms," declares the LORD. "Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; they will come against all her surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah. 16 I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made. 17 "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. 18 Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land--against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. 19 They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

1:5 God knew you, as he knew Jeremiah, long before you were born or even conceived. He thought about you and planned for you. When you feel discouraged or inadequate, remember that God has always thought of you as valuable and that he has a purpose in mind for you.

1:5 Jeremiah was "appointed" by God "as a prophet to the nations." God has a purpose for each Christian, but some people are appointed by God for specific kinds of work. Samson (Judges 13:3-5), David (1 Samuel 16:12-13), John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-17), and Paul (Galatians 1:15-16) were also called to do particular jobs for God. Whatever work you do should be done for the glory of God (Philippians 1:11). If God gives you a specific task, accept it cheerfully and do it with diligence. If God has not given you a specific call or

assignment, then seek to fulfill the mission common to all believers—to love, obey, and serve God—until his guidance becomes more clear.

1:6-8 Often people struggle with new challenges because they lack self-confidence, feeling that they have inadequate ability, training, or experience. Jeremiah thought he was too young and inexperienced to be God's spokesman to the world. But God promised to be with him. We should not allow feelings of inadequacy to keep us from obeying God's call. He will always be with us. When you find yourself avoiding something you know you should do, be careful not to use lack of self-confidence as an excuse. If God gives you a job to do, he will provide all you need to do it.

1:8 God promised to be with Jeremiah and to take care of him, but not to keep trouble from coming. God did not insulate him from imprisonment, deportation, or insults. God does not keep us from encountering life's storms, but he will see us through them. In fact, God walks through these storms with us and rescues us.

1:10 God appointed Jeremiah to bring his word to "nations and kingdoms." Jeremiah's work was to warn not only the Jews but all the nations of the world about God's judgment for sin. Don't forget in reading the Old Testament that, while God was consistently working through the people of Judah and Israel, his plan was to communicate to every nation and person. We are included in Jeremiah's message of judgment and hope, and as believers we are to share God's desire to reach the whole world for him.

1:11-14 The vision of the almond branch revealed that the beginning of God's judgment would come soon because the almond tree is among the first to blossom in the spring. God saw the sins of Judah and the nations, and he would carry out swift and certain judgment. The boiling, seething pot tipping over from the north and spilling over Judah pictured Babylon delivering God's scalding judgment against Jeremiah's people.

1:14-19 The problems we face may not seem as ominous as Jeremiah's, but they are critical to us and may overwhelm us! God's promise to Jeremiah and to us is that nothing will defeat us completely; he will help us through the most agonizing problems. Face each day with the assurance that God will be with you and see you through.

1:16 The people of Judah sinned greatly by continuing to burn incense to and worship other gods. God had commanded them specifically against this (Exodus 20:3-6) because idolatry places trust in created things rather than the Creator. Although these people belonged to God, they chose to follow false gods. Many "gods" entice us to turn away from God. Material possessions, dreams for the future, approval of others, and vocational goals compete for our total commitment. Striving after these at the expense of our commitment to God puts our heart where Judah's was—and God severely punished Judah.

Bible Study Notes - Chapter 2

Israel Forsakes God

1 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: " 'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. 3 Israel was holy to the LORD, the first fruits of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them,' " declares the LORD. 4 Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, all you clans of the house of Israel. 5 This is what the LORD says: "What fault did your fathers find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. 6 They did not ask, 'Where is the LORD, who brought us up out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness, through a land of desert sand rifts, a land of drought and darkness, a land where no one travels and no one lives?' 7 I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable. 8 The priests did not ask, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who deal with the law did not know me; the leaders rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols. 9 "Therefore I bring charges against you again," declares the LORD. "And I will bring charges against your children's children. 10 Cross over to the coasts of Kittim and look, send to Kedar and observe closely; see if there has ever been anything like this: 11 Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are

not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols. 12 Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. 13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

2:1-3:5 In this section, the marriage analogy sharply contrasts God's love for his people with their love for other gods and reveals Judah's faithlessness. Jeremiah condemned Judah (he sometimes called Judah "Jerusalem," the name of its capital city) for seeking security in worthless, changeable things rather than the unchangeable God. We may be tempted to seek security from possessions, people, or our own abilities, but these will fail us. There is no lasting security apart from the eternal God.

2:2 We appreciate a friend who remains true to his or her commitment, and we are disappointed with someone who fails to keep a promise. God was pleased when his people obeyed initially, but he became angry with them when they refused to keep their commitment. Temptations distract us from God. Think about your original commitment to obey God, and ask yourself if you are remaining truly devoted.

2:3 Both the first fruits of the harvest and the firstborn sons were to be set apart for God (Deuteronomy 26:1-11). That's how God's people had declared their allegiance to him in years gone by. Israel had been as eager to please God as if she were his young bride, a holy, devoted people. This contrasted greatly with the situation in Jeremiah's time.

2:4-8 The united nation of Israel included both the "clans of Israel" and the "descendants of Jacob" (Judah). Jeremiah knew Israel's history well. The prophets recited history to the people for several reasons: (1) to remind them of God's faithfulness; (2) to make sure the people wouldn't forget (they didn't have Bibles to read); (3) to emphasize God's love for them; (4) to remind the people that there was a time when they were close to God. We should learn from history so we can build on the successes and avoid repeating the failures of others.

2:8 Baal was the chief male god of the Canaanite religion. Baal was the god of fertility, and the worship of Baal included animal sacrifice and sacred prostitution (male and female) in the high places. Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, introduced Baal worship into the northern kingdom, and eventually it spread to Judah. The sexual nature of this worship was a constant temptation to the Israelites, who were called to be holy.

2:10 God was saying that even pagan nations like Kittim (Cyprus, in the west) and Kedar (the home of Arab tribes living in the desert east of Palestine) remained loyal to their national gods. But Israel had abandoned the one and only God for a completely worthless object of worship.

2:13 Who would set aside a bubbling fountain or spring of fresh water for a cracked, broken cistern—a pit for collecting rainwater—that couldn't even hold the water? God told the Israelites they were doing that very thing when they turned from him, the "spring of living water," to worship idols. The people had built religious systems in which to store truth, but those systems were worthless. Why should we cling to the broken promises of unstable "cisterns" (money, power, religious systems, or whatever transitory thing we are choosing in place of God) when God promises to constantly refresh us with himself, the living water (John 4:10)?

14 Is Israel a servant, a slave by birth? Why then has he become plunder? 15 Lions have roared; they have growled at him. They have laid waste his land; his towns are burned and deserted. 16 Also, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have shaved the crown of your head. 17 Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the LORD your God when he led you in the way? 18 Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Shihor? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the River? 19 Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe of me," declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty. 20 "Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, 'I will not serve you!' Indeed, on every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down as a prostitute. 21 I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine? 22 Although you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me," declares the Sovereign

LORD. 23 "How can you say, 'I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals'? See how you behaved in the valley; consider what you have done. You are a swift she-camel running here and there, 24 a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving-- in her heat who can restrain her? Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her. 25 Do not run until your feet are bare and your throat is dry. But you said, 'It's no use! I love foreign gods, and I must go after them.' 26 "As a thief is disgraced when he is caught, so the house of Israel is disgraced-- they, their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets. 27 They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!' 28 Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah. 29 "Why do you bring charges against me? You have all rebelled against me," declares the LORD. 30 "In vain I punished your people; they did not respond to correction. Your sword has devoured your prophets like a ravening lion. 31 "You of this generation, consider the word of the LORD: "Have I been a desert to Israel or a land of great darkness? Why do my people say, 'We are free to roam; we will come to you no more'? 32 Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number. 33 How skilled you are at pursuing love! Even the worst of women can learn from your ways. 34 On your clothes men find the lifeblood of the innocent poor, though you did not catch them breaking in. Yet in spite of all this 35 you say, 'I am innocent; he is not angry with me.' But I will pass judgment on you because you say, 'I have not sinned.' 36 Why do you go about so much, changing your ways? You will be disappointed by Egypt as you were by Assyria. 37 You will also leave that place with your hands on your head, for the LORD has rejected those you trust; you will not be helped by them.

2:16-17 Memphis was near modern Cairo's present location in lower Egypt, and Tahpanhes was in northeastern Egypt. Jeremiah could be speaking of Pharaoh Shishak's previous invasion of Judah in 926 B.C. (1 Kings 14:25), or he may have been predicting Pharaoh Necho's invasion in 609 B.C. when King Josiah of Judah would be killed (2 Kings 23:29-30). Jeremiah's point is that the people brought this on themselves by rebelling against God.

2:22 The stain of sin is more than skin-deep. Israel had stains that could not be washed out, even with the strongest cleansers. Spiritual cleansing must reach deep into the heart—and this is a job that God alone can do. We cannot ignore the effects of sin and hope they will go away. Your sin has caused a deep stain that only God can remove if you are willing to let him cleanse you (Isaiah 1:18; Ezekiel 36:25).

2:23-27 The people are compared to animals who search for mates in mating season. Unrestrained, they rush for power, money, alliances with foreign powers, and other gods. The idols did not seek the people; the people sought the idols and ran wildly after them. Then they became so comfortable in their sin that they could not think of giving it up. Their only shame was in getting caught. If we desire something so much that we'll do anything to get it, this is a sign that we are addicted to it and out of tune with God.

2:30 Being a prophet in Jeremiah's day was risky business. Prophets had to criticize the policies of evil kings, and this made them appear to be traitors. The kings hated the prophets for standing against their policies, and the people often hated the prophets for preaching against their idolatrous lifestyles (see Acts 7:52).

2:31-32 Forgetting can be dangerous, whether it is intentional or an oversight. Israel deliberately ignored God by focusing its affections on the allurements of the world. The more we focus on the passing pleasures of this life, the easier it becomes to forget God's care, his love, his dependability, his guidance, and most of all, God himself. What pleases you most? Have you been forgetting God lately? **2:36** God is not against alliances or working partnerships, but he is against people trusting others for the help that should come from him. This was the problem in Jeremiah's time. After the days of David and Solomon, Israel fell apart because the leaders turned to other nations and gods instead of the true God. They played power politics, thinking that their strong neighbors could protect them. But Judah would soon learn that its alliance with Egypt would be just as disappointing as its former alliance with Assyria (2 Kings 16:8-9; Isaiah 7:13-25).