

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

General title to the whole Book, Jeremiah 1:1-3. Jeremiah receives a commission to prophesy concerning nations and kingdoms, a work to which in the Divine purpose he had been appointed before his birth, Jeremiah 1:4-10. The vision of the rod of an almond tree and of the seething pot, with their signification, Jeremiah 1:11-16. Promises of Divine protection to Jeremiah in the discharge of the arduous duties of his prophetic office, Jeremiah 1:17-19.

Verses 1-3

The words of Jeremiah - These three verses are the title of the Book; and were probably added by Ezra when he collected and arranged the sacred books, and put them in that order in which they are found in Hebrew Bibles in general. For particulars relative to this prophet, the times of his prophesying, and the arrangement of his discourses, see the introduction.

Eleventh year of Zedekiah - That is, the last year of his reign; for he was made prisoner by the Chaldeans in the fourth month of that year, and the carrying away of the inhabitants of Jerusalem was in the fifth month of the same year.

Verse 4

The word of the Lord came unto me - Then I first felt the inspiring influence of the Divine Spirit, not only revealing to me the subjects which he would have me to declare to the people, but also the words which I should use in these declarations.

Verse 5

Before I formed thee - I had destined thee to the prophetic office before thou wert born: I had formed my plan, and appointed thee to be my envoy to his people. St. Paul speaks of his own call to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles in similar terms, Galatians 1:15, Galatians 1:16.

Verse 6

I cannot speak - Being very young, and wholly inexperienced, I am utterly incapable of conceiving aright, or of clothing these Divine subjects in suitable language. Those who are really called of God to the sacred ministry are such as have been brought to a deep acquaintance with themselves, feel their own ignorance, and know their own weakness. They know also the awful responsibility that attaches to the work; and nothing but the authority of God can induce such to undertake it. They whom God never called run, because of worldly honor and emolument: the others hear the call with fear and trembling, and can go only in the strength of Jehovah.

“How ready is the man to go,

Whom God hath never sent!

How timorous, diffident, and slow,

God’s chosen instrument!”

Verse 7

Whatsoever I command thee - It is my words and message, not thine own, that thou shalt deliver. I shall teach thee; therefore thy youth and inexperience can be no hinderance.

Verse 8

Be not afraid of their faces - That is, the Jews, whom he knew would persecute him because of the message which he brought. To be fore-warned is to be half armed. He knew what he was to expect from the disobedient and the rebellious, and must now be prepared to meet it.

Verse 10

I have - set thee over the nations - God represents his messengers the prophets as doing what he commanded them to declare should be done. In this sense they rooted up, pulled down, and destroyed - declared God’s judgments, they builded up and planted - declared the promises of his mercy. Thus God says to Isaiah, Isaiah 6:10: “Make the heart of this people fat - and shut their eyes.” Show them that they are stupid and blind; and that, because they have shut their eyes and hardened their hearts, God will in his judgments leave them to their hardness and darkness.

Verse 11

A rod of an almond tree - “שֶׁמֶט” (shaked), from “שָׁקַד” (shakad), “to be ready,” “to hasten,” “to

watch for an opportunity to do a thing, to awake; because the almond tree is the first to flower and bring forth fruit. Pliny says, Floret prima omnium amygdala mense Januario; Martio vero pomum maturat. It blossoms in January, when other trees are locked up in their winter's repose; and it bears fruit in March, just at the commencement of spring, when other trees only begin to bud. It was here the symbol of that promptitude with which God was about to fulfill his promises and threatening. As a rod, says Dahler, is an instrument of punishment, the rod of the almond may be intended here as the symbol of that punishment which the prophet was about to announce.

Verse 12

I will hasten my word - Here is a paronomasia. What dost thou see? I see "shaked" (shoked), "an almond, the hastening tree: that which first awakes. Thou hast well seen, for "shoked" I will hasten my word. I will awake, or watch over my word for the first opportunity to inflict the judgments which I threaten. The judgment shall come speedily; it shall soon flourish, and come to maturity.

Verse 13

A seething pot - toward the north - We find, from Ezekiel 24:3, etc., that a boiling pot was an emblem of war, and the desolations it produces. Some have thought that by the seething pot Judea is intended, agitated by the invasion of the Chaldeans, whose land lay north of Judea. But Dr. Blayney contends that "x^ax^ax^a xTM xⁱx^ax^a x^a" (mippeney tsaphonah) should be translated, From the face of the north, as it is in the margin; for, from the next verse, it appears that the evil was to come from the north; and therefore the steam, which was designed as an emblem of that evil, must have arisen from that quarter also. The pot denotes the empire of the Babylonians and Chaldeans lying to the north of Judea, and pouring forth its multitudes like a thick vapor, to overspread the land. Either of these interpretations will suit the text.

Verse 14

Shall break forth - "x^ax^ax^a— (tippathach), shall be opened. The door shall be thrown abroad, that these calamities may pass out freely.

Verse 15

Shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates - As the gates of the cities were the ordinary places where justice was administered, so the enemies of Jerusalem are here represented as conquering the whole land, assuming the reins of government, and laying the whole country under their own laws; so that the Jews should no longer possess any political power: they should be wholly subjugated by their enemies.

Verse 16

I will utter my judgments - God denounced his judgments: the conquest of their cities, and the destruction of the realm, were the facts to which these judgments referred; and these facts prove that the threatening was fulfilled.

Worshipped the works of their own hands - Idolatry was the source of all their wickedness and was the cause of their desolations. For "x^ax^ax^axTM (lemaasey), the works, more than a hundred MSS. of Kennicott's and De Rossi's, with many editions, have "x^ax^ax^ax^a" (lemaaseh), the work. Idolatry was their One great Work, the business of their life, their trade.

Verse 17

Gird up thy loins - Take courage and be ready, lest I confound thee; take courage and be resolute, "x^ax^aÿ (pen), lest by their opposition thou be terrified and confounded. God is often represented as doing or causing to be done, what he only permits or suffers to be done. Or, do not fear them, I will not suffer thee to be confounded. So Dahler, Ne crains pas que je te confonde a leurs yeux, "Do not fear that I shall confound thee before them." It is well known that the phrase, gird up thy reins, is a metaphor taken from the long robes of the Asiatics; which, on going a journey, or performing their ordinary work, they were obliged to truss up under their girdles, that the motions of the body might not be impeded.

Verse 18

I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and, brazen walls - Though thou shalt be exposed to persecutions and various indignities, they shall not prevail against thee. To their attacks thou shalt be as an impregnable city; as unshaken as an iron pillar; and as imperishable as a wall of brass. None, therefore, can have less cause to apprehend danger than thou hast. The issue proved the truth of this promise: he outlived all their insults; and saw Jerusalem destroyed, and his enemies, and the enemies of his Lord, carried into captivity. Instead of "x^a—x^ax^a (chomoth), walls, many MSS. and editions read "x^a—x^ax^a (chomath), a wall, which corresponds with the singular nouns preceding.

