

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON JEREMIAH

LESSON TWELVE: JEREMIAH'S ASSIGNMENT

by Sandy Harber

"See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." Jeremiah 1:10

When God called Jeremiah into His service there was no delay, no prep time. "This day," God said, "Jeremiah, your new responsibilities start now!" Those responsibilities included bringing messages of judgment and blessing to many nations and kingdoms that had dealings with the Kingdom of Judah, such as Egypt, Babylon, Edom, Moab, and Ammon. "This day" is always the right time to serve God. God lives in today. He is the great I AM, not I WAS or I WILL BE. If you have never served the Lord before, that's okay. You can start now (II Corinthians 6:1-2). God provides on-the-job training that occurs at your pace (Isaiah 28:9-10). There's even a Training Manual that comes along with the job (II Timothy 3:16). And a Tutor, Who provides guidance (John 14:26).

God set His prophet over the nations. That is, God made Jeremiah His deputy (Hebrew "pakeed"). This title invested Jeremiah with high authority, having the power to root out, pull down, etc. It was his responsibility to remove the bad ("to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down") and establish the good in its place ("to build and to plant"). Jeremiah stood in the place of God as His representative on earth. Notice that there are twice as many negative terms as there are positive. The nations were heading for a time of judgment that would be devastating. But, when the evil was rooted out and thrown away, the cleansing punishment would yield a nation ripe for rebuilding and replanting.

The imagery depicts Judah as a rotten plant that needs to be pulled up by its roots and cast aside. Then a new, healthy plant can grow up in its place. Scripture frequently depicts God as a Husbandman and Israel as the vineyard that He planted (Matthew 21:33). God expected His choice vine (Judah) to produce abundant spiritual fruit. Instead, the vine brought forth grapes that were unfit for human consumption. In other words, useless (Isaiah 5:1-4). God provided everything that His vineyard needed to grow healthy and strong and produce righteous fruit (Isaiah 5:3-4). But Israel and Judah both turned away from their God and served the false gods of neighboring countries. False prophets and corrupt priests led the people in their rebellion against the Lord (Jeremiah 5:31). The abominable practices of these idol worshippers, including child sacrifice, were adopted by God's Own people (Jeremiah 7:31). They even erected statues of foreign gods in the Temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 7:30) in defiance of the second commandments (Exodus 20:4-5). Entire families participated in the worship of Ashtoreth, Queen of Heaven, on the roof top of their homes (Jeremiah 7:18). The only remedy was to pull up the infected plants by their roots and destroy them. Then replant the vineyard with healthy plants. It was Jeremiah's task to expose the rot and call out the false prophets and corrupt priests that led the people astray (Jeremiah 5:31).

The kingdom is also viewed as a broken down building that is an eye sore and a dangerous structure that is too far gone to be repaired. The old building must be torn down to the foundation and destroyed. Then a new sturdy, well-built structure may stand in its place. Paul told the Church, "Ye are God's building" (I Corinthians 3:9). He, Paul was the master builder who laid the foundation of God's building (I Corinthians 3:10). That foundation is Jesus (I Corinthians 3:11). Once you have accepted Jesus as your Savior your old "building" (life) begins on the firm foundation of Jesus' substitutionary death. How you construct your life-building on this foundation will determine which rewards you will receive or lose on Judgment Day (I Corinthians 3:12-15).

Jeremiah, like Paul, was tasked with pointing out the sin that was destroying his people and urging them to repent and get right with God. Paul enjoyed great success in his ministry. Jeremiah did not.

"Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. . . Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." Jeremiah 18:18