

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON JEREMIAH

LESSON THIRTEEN: JEREMIAH'S FIRST VISION

by Sandy Harber

"Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree." Jeremiah 1:11

Jeremiah was having quite a day! The Lord God informed him that He had planned for Jeremiah to be His prophet since before he was born (v. 5). When Jeremiah protested that he was not ready, God assured him that He would be there to protect him (vv. 6-7). Then God touched his mouth and placed His Word into Jeremiah's body (v. 9). And, He appointed Jeremiah His deputy over the nations, investing him with high authority and power to tear down and to build up (v. 10). In addition to all this ("moreover") God gave him two visions.

It is unknown whether the Lord had ever spoken to Jeremiah before this day but it's highly unlikely that God had previously touched him physically or given him a vision. This was a major change in the life of a young man who had expected to serve as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem, following in the footsteps of his father. As a prophet Jeremiah would be serving God in a more intimate way. He was in direct communication with the Holy One of Israel, receiving orders from and reporting directly to God Himself. And God's methods of communication were sometimes miraculous.

Jeremiah's first vision was of a rod, or branch, of an almond tree. The almond tree was the first tree to awaken from the long winter nap. "Almond" in Hebrew literally means "awake." In January the almond tree would blossom and produce fruit, giving promise of a fruitful season to follow. Thus, it was known as "the awake tree."

God Himself interpreted the meaning of the almond rod. "I will hasten my word to perform it," He said (v. 12). God was using a play on words here. "Almond" in Hebrew is "shaged." "Hasty" in Hebrew is "shoged." An alternate name for the almond tree was "the hasty tree." The point was that judgment was awake in the land and it was coming soon.

The form that this judgment would take isn't revealed to Jeremiah until he had the second vision. God chose to use Babylon as His rod of correction on His wayward children. Jeremiah was commissioned in 627 B.C. It would be 21-22 years before Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would lead his army against the Kingdom of Judah, the first of three invasions. The destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple would not occur until 586 B.C., 41 years after Jeremiah's vision. Twenty to forty years may not seem "hasty" to you or me with our finite life spans. But to an eternal Being to Whom a thousand years is but a day (II Peter 3:8) it is the equivalent of a few seconds. Still, it is enough time for the people of Judah to repent and change their ways. God always gives us the opportunity to self correct before He intervenes.

The Hebrew word "shoged" may also be translated "watch; alert; be on the lookout for." God is always watching, "beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). His judgment is based on what He observes. The people of Judah brought judgment upon themselves by deserting the God Who brought them out of Egypt and established them in the land of Canaan, and by embracing the false gods of neighboring nations (Jeremiah 2:13). What does God observe when He looks at your life? If you are His child you will feel the rod of correction at times in your life (Hebrews 12:5-6). It is proof that you belong to Him. He loves you and wants to set your feet on the right path. It is so much easier to self correct and avoid that spanking from your Heavenly Father. Be alert to your own actions.

"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jeremiah 2:13