

# Born to Win

## Jeremiah #1

by Ronald L. Dart

If God were going to send us a prophet today, what sort of man would he be? Would he perhaps be a rough-hewn, mountain-man type like Elijah, dressed in leather, riding into town on a Harley? Or would he be a smooth, educated orator like Isaiah? Or maybe he would be a man like Jeremiah, who gives his name to the *jeremiad*, which is defined as a “prolonged lamentation or complaint”.

Well, if God has sent us a prophet today he is *awfully* well disguised; and, of course, it’s also possible that if we ask God, “Well, where is a prophet today?”, God might very well say, “I already sent you prophets. Listen to them.” After all, the Old Testament prophets spoke to their *own* generation about what was going on right *then*, but then they *wrote the prophecies down*.

Why did they do that? Well, they wrote them down because history repeats itself; and, consequently, so does prophecy. History repeats itself because man doesn’t change, and because God doesn’t change. And so since man doesn’t change, and he does the same things over again, God, who doesn’t change, *responds* the same way over again. One of the prophets—Isaiah—tells us how it works. In his 41<sup>st</sup> chapter, verse 21, quoting God, he says this:

### Isaiah 41

NIV '84

<sup>21</sup> “Present your case”, says the LORD. “Set forth your arguments”, says Jacob’s King. “Bring in [your idols] to tell us what is going to happen.” [...]

“Alright, this is what we’re going to do”, he says, “Let’s challenge. Your false gods, your idols, these things that you make out of silver and gold—bring them in, let them tell us what’s going to happen.”

### Isaiah 41

NIV '84

<sup>22</sup> [...] Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come,

<sup>23</sup> tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. [...]

God seems to tell us that *that’s* the real test: Can you tell me what the future’s going to be? And to do that, you need to tell us what were the *former* things, so that we can “consider them” and know the final outcome. What God is telling us, indirectly, is that a *real* prophet will tell you the past so you can understand the future. Out of this comes the concept of “type” and “antitype” in religious conversation about prophecy. The word “type” comes from the Greek word for “model” [*tupos*, τύπος, Strong’s 65179]; the “antitype” [*antitupos*, ἀντίτυπος, Strong’s 6499] is a *later* model. In other words, something happens in the past; it will happen again in the future with variations. And oddly enough, you see this pattern developed again and again in the Old Testament prophets as they apply their prophecies, not only to *their own* days, but to the *last* days, as well.

So here we sit, in what may be the most dangerous time in our history, and not a single *real* prophet on the horizon. Oh, there are would-be prophets, wannabe prophets out there by the dozens. There are foretellers of the future and psychics and what have you. Now, I'm not talking about that; I'm talking about *real prophets*.

It reminds me of the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. The Rich Man asks Abraham, "O send Lazarus to warn my brothers of the dangers of hell." (The Rich Man and Lazarus had both died. The Rich Man is in hell; Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom.) The Rich Man says, "Send Lazarus to warn my brothers about this *terrible* place." Abraham replies,

### Luke 16

AKJV

<sup>29</sup> [...] They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

<sup>30</sup> And [the Rich Man] said, No, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent.

<sup>31</sup> And [Abraham] said to him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Maybe...maybe that's what God is telling us: "Why should I send you a prophet? You have Moses and the prophets. And more than that, you have my Son. Hear *them!*"

Well, I'm not a prophet, but I can *read* the prophets; and what I read is not entirely comforting, because what I read seems definitely to apply to the end times. It seems to fit us, our people today, like a glove; and the message is...well, it's daunting.

In this series on real prophets, I want to take you now and introduce you to one of the strongest voices in the Bible—one who speaks down through the ages to our generation.

His name is Jeremiah. In Hebrew [Strong's H3414] it means, literally, "raised by Jehovah". Now, it's an interesting name because Jeremiah was chosen by God and began to prophesy at a *very early* age. He says, in fact, that he was chosen from the womb; so it's almost as though God picked him out, before he was even born, and *raised him* for the prophet's office. And when he actually starts to prophesy, Jeremiah objects, saying, "Lord God, I'm just a *child*. I don't have any business doing this." And God, of course, says, "Oh, yes you do."

Most of the prophets, interestingly enough, start out *very* young. The popular image of a prophet is a gray, bearded, old man who shows up on the scene saying, "Flee from the wrath to come!" But the *real* prophets? They start out *very* young and they prophesy for *many* years, and by the time the real crisis arrives—the time when they have got to speak and be believed—they are well-known, established—controversial, even—public figures. They didn't come out of nowhere.

Jeremiah is the son of a priest, and therefore a hereditary priest himself. He dates...oh, from about 627 B.C., they tell us, and he was active for something close to 50 years. The great prophet Isaiah had been dead about 30 years before Jeremiah became active. Ezekiel goes captive to Babylon some 30 years after Jeremiah begins his work, and Ezekiel becomes active in Babylon. So you have them in order, as it were: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were contemporary for a short time in Judah, and probably even knew one another. We could talk more about the background of Jeremiah, but probably it's best to let him tell it himself. Jeremiah, chapter 1, verse 1:

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:

<sup>2</sup> To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

This is where they get the date 627.

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>3</sup> It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, to the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, to the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

So the dates encompassed here are from 627 to 597 B.C.—some 30 years. (All dates, by the way, in the Bible like this are approximate and depend on which scholar you happen to be listening to; that’s why I say “about”.) Jeremiah continued to be active for some years afterward in Egypt, and possibly beyond 597. He says,

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

<sup>5</sup> Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet to the nations.

This is a *remarkable* statement. What he is saying here is: before there was *even any shape* to Jeremiah in the womb—I would say perhaps very shortly after conception—he says, “I *knew* you.” Jeremiah was identifiable. Who he was was determined. And so the Lord said, “I set you apart before you came out of the womb”, which means, having been set apart, Jeremiah was holy, and he was ordained (or appointed) a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah speaking:

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>6</sup> Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

The choice was made before he was born, and the movement of this young boy into activity was *very* early. *He* felt he was totally unqualified. This was, of course, while Josiah was king; and Josiah was a good king [2 Kings 22:2; 2 Chronicles 34:2]—these were good times in Judah, when there really wouldn’t have been a lot of work for a prophet. If you read the Biblical prophets, you’ll know what I’m talking about when I say “not a lot of work”; because when people are doing the right thing why should God send a prophet along to pat them on the head? Just because you’re living your life right—you’re telling the truth, you’re not stealing from your neighbor, you’re not committing adultery with your neighbor’s wife, you are just living a good life—why should God send a prophet to *congratulate* you for what you’re doing? Well, he doesn’t. When he sends the prophets, it’s not to congratulate you, but to kick you in the rear and say, “It’s about time for you to shape up, buddy.” So here is Jeremiah’s call: “Let’s go to work.”

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>6</sup> Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to me, Say not, I am a child: for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatever I command you you shall speak.

<sup>8</sup> Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with you to deliver you, said the LORD.

Now, this sets the stage for the kind of prophet Jeremiah is going to be. He is going to be *adversarial* and he is going to be *controversial*. People are not going to *like* what he has to say. They're going to fight against him, and God's going to have to deliver him (more than once as it turns out). Jeremiah tells us,

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. [“My words in your mouth.”]

<sup>10</sup> See, I have this day set you 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.

Now, we know what followed on the heels of this; and, in fact, if you read all the way through Jeremiah's prophecy and the associated histories within the Bible, we get *a lot* of rooting out, pulling down, and destruction; because that seems to be where Israel is headed and what's going to take place. We really don't encounter much in the way of building and planting in the historical narrative or in the prophecy... Well, yes we *do* find it in the prophecy; we just don't find it historically *fulfilled* by Jeremiah. We *do* know that Jeremiah eventually went to Egypt with a remnant of the captives of Judah [Jeremiah 43], and there is a story that he eventually made his way to Ireland with one of the royal princesses of Judah and planted the throne of Israel in Ireland. (I have nothing in print on that subject, but I can refer you to a source for the information if you'd like to have it.) Let's listen now to the rest of what God had to say to this fledgling prophet, Jeremiah.

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>11</sup> Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Jeremiah, what see you? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

<sup>12</sup> Then said the LORD to me, You have well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

Now, that's kind of odd. Why does that one thing tell you the other? And, of course, if you know the trees of Palestine you would understand that the almond tree is absolutely the first tree in the spring to bud. So the fact that it's going to be a rod of an *almond* tree means it's going to be early.

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>13</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying, What see you? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north.

<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD said to me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth on all the inhabitants of the land.

<sup>15</sup> For, see, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, said the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

Every bit of this happened historically: the Babylonians *did* come down, and besieged *all* the cities, and finally besieged and took Jerusalem. Now, what is curious about this is that Daniel later will speak of a “King of the North” [Daniel 11]; and the “King of the South” will push at the King of the North; and the King of the North will come *rolling* back down against him, will enter into “the glorious land” (that is, into Palestine), and every indication is he surrounds Jerusalem again from the north. It happened *again*.

You understand what I meant when I said earlier that history repeats itself? And that's the reason why these prophecies were written down—for us to look at them and say, "This happened before. It happened again. Is it going to happen yet another time in the future?" Well, Jesus said plainly that, in the end, Jerusalem would *once again* be surrounded with armies; and if you're there, you better get out of the city and away from there when you see it coming; because it is going to be destroyed *yet again* [Luke 21]. And other indications in prophecy suggest this one also will come down from the north (which is really about the only major way for an entry to be made into Palestine except from Egypt in the south).

So you see what I mean by history repeating itself—prophecy being dual in its relationships and showing up again and again down through history, and why it is that it might be important for those of us in this generation to look back and examine the history of what happened at Jerusalem in the past—for it may be close to happening again. Well, here's what happened the other time, the first time. In verse 16 of Jeremiah 1, God says,

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense to other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

You can easily understand how God would use this term, "worshipped the works of their own hands", relative to people making a graven image or an idol and then bowing down to the thing. And many of the prophets are at some lengths to tell people, "How stupid can you be? You made this thing. You fastened it onto this board that you carry it around with. It can't walk. It can't move. You have to carry it. And you pray to this thing, expecting it can do something, when you've got to *carry* it?" *That's* the kind of idol they worshiped then. But now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, if you watch television, you might get the impression that we worship the works of our own hands—like new cars, and television sets, and computers that we buy from Dell. And so on it goes; we worship the works of our own hands, in a way, just like they did. He says,

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>17</sup> You therefore gird up your loins, and arise, and speak to them all that I command you: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound you before them.

"Oh, they're going to roll their eyes. They're going to make faces. They're going to turn the corners of their mouths down. They're going to act like they think *you're crazy*, but you don't pay any attention to them."

### Jeremiah 1

AKJV

<sup>18</sup> For, behold, I have made you this day a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

<sup>19</sup> And they shall fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you, said the LORD, to deliver you.

Now, considering that Jeremiah was just a kid when God told him this, this had to be more than a little bit daunting; but there is in Jeremiah's prophecy from beginning to end not a hint that Jeremiah *ever yielded an inch*. But *boy*, does this lay out for him what he is going to have to face. And the fact is: those who tell the truth to power are going to have to be strong—now every bit as much as then.

I suppose it should be obvious, but we might as well make this clear: No government is ever going to want to hear bad news from a prophet. The truth is that governments tend to take on the role of God for the people, and they tend to see the *real* God as *a rival*. I'm not talking here about any individual leader; I'm talking about the system. Keep your eyes open and never forget for a moment that governmental systems tend to see God as *a rival*. The evidence of it is in the news *nearly every day*. Jeremiah faced it *then*; he would face it right now, today, if he were here.

## Jeremiah 2

AKJV

<sup>1</sup> Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

<sup>2</sup> Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus said the LORD; I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

What an interesting statement he makes here: “I remember you”, says God. “I remember how you felt toward me when you were young. I remember the love you had for me at the first, when you followed me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown.” There’s an interesting parallel between this statement and our own history as a people. When our forefathers founded this country, they started out by saying,

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights

*United States Declaration of Independence - July 4, 1776*

When we started this country, we recognized *God* as our *creator*. We knew him as the *guarantor* of our rights and of our freedoms. Our land was surely a wilderness and a land that was not sown, but as the people came here *they believed in God*. They may not have *followed* him very well. They surely didn’t all follow him the same way, but there was a belief in God—a creator—and people did believe in the Bible, and that the Bible was true (even when they honored it in the breach). We took steps in this land to guarantee our religious freedom, steps that have been turned against us now in a determined effort to remove God from public life in this country.

There’s a war going on. Rabbi Daniel Lapin has called it, “America’s Real War”—between those who would remove God from the country *entirely* and those of us who are trying to keep him in the public mind. God said,

## Jeremiah 2

AKJV

<sup>3</sup> Israel was holiness to the LORD, and the first fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come on them, said the LORD.

<sup>4</sup> Hear you the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:

<sup>5</sup> Thus said the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

So I will ask the question of the American people, right now: What did God do wrong? Where did he make a mistake? What lawlessness have you found in God? How has he offended us? What has he done wrong to us that we have begun as a people to go far from him and have walked after vanity and have become vain? Continuing now with Jeremiah:

**Jeremiah 2**

AKJV

<sup>6</sup> Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelled?

And I might say to the American people today: They don't say, "Where is the Lord that brought us through two great world wars? Where is the God that has been on our side through the fight for independence, through the War of 1812, through all the wars of our past, through all of our trials, and all of our troubles? Where is that God?" Well, *he* hasn't left. Have *we*? "I brought you...", speaks God...

**Jeremiah 2**

AKJV

<sup>7</sup> And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when you entered, you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.

Where did we go wrong? What's the cause? Who led us down this garden path to destruction that we seem to be headed on? Well, listen to what Jeremiah said to Israel under God's direction of old:

**Jeremiah 2**

AKJV

<sup>8</sup> The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit [*that were worthless*].

Do you realize what he is saying here? He is saying the problem started with the religious leaders: the priests, the pastors (and, incidentally, the lawyers—the people who handle the Law). They would not say, "Where is God? Why don't we look for God? Why don't we trust God? Why don't we turn to God?" No, they didn't do that.

Now, exactly where the priests and the pastors went wrong is a matter for its own field of investigation. In fact, there's a pretty good chance, if you go talk to your pastor, that he can tell you where the changes began to take place from the great preachers of the past to the preachers of today, and the kind of thing they're trying to tell us—both from pulpits and from the stage. I call it a "stage" advisedly, in many of the television churches. For that's what it is; it is a place for performance, not a place for telling people the *hard truth* about the way they live their lives. "However," God says in verse 9,

**Jeremiah 2**

AKJV

<sup>9</sup> [...] I will yet plead with you, said the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. [*I'm still going to try.*]

<sup>10</sup> For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send to Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

<sup>11</sup> Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? [...]

He said, "It is really something to see. Out here there are all kinds of nations that have gods that are nothing but idols that they have to carry to get them from one place to another. And they will go through generation after generation and will never change their gods...but my people will. My people—to whom I have appeared, for whom I have done all these wonderful things, whom I have blessed and given this great land—*my people will forget me at the drop of a hat.*" He says,

**Jeremiah 2**

AKJV

<sup>11</sup> [...] but my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. *[It isn't worth a dime.]*

<sup>12</sup> Be astonished, O you heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, said the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

They walked away from the fountain of life and have gone to something which has nothing whatsoever to offer them. What are they gone to? Well, if you look at our country, our world, right now, it would seem to be the *works of their own hands*.

**Jeremiah 2**

AKJV

<sup>14</sup> Is Israel a servant? Is he a home born slave? Why is he spoiled?

<sup>15</sup> The young lions roared on him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

Because early on, long before they went into captivity, there had been invasion after invasion and the cities had been burned. Verse 17 of chapter 2:

**Jeremiah 2**

KJ2000

<sup>17</sup> Have you not brought this unto yourself, in that you have forsaken the LORD your God, when he led you by the way?

“He was leading you step by step down the right path...and you left him.”

**Jeremiah 2**

AKJV

<sup>18</sup> And now what have you to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what have you to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

<sup>19</sup> Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that you have forsaken the LORD your God, and that my fear is not in you, said the Lord GOD of hosts.

“You may think this path you’re walking is a good path, but you are going to find it is *bitter* beyond belief.” What makes this so sad is that Israel told God [verse 20], “Oh, I will not transgress; I will do the right thing”, when God says, “You went out there, everywhere you went, and played the harlot.”

We will talk about Jeremiah next time. Until then, I’m Ronald Dart.

Transcript of a *Born to Win*  
radio program by  
Ronald L. Dart.

*Christian Educational Ministries*  
P.O. Box 560 ❖ Whitehouse, Texas 75791  
Phone: 1-888-BIBLE-44 ❖ Fax: (903) 839-9311  
❖ [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net) ❖

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