

# Exegesis of Jeremiah 1:4-10

OT lesson for Epiphany 4, Series C, Jan. 31, 2010

By Rev. Paul Wenz

## I. **Background** for the pericope of Jeremiah's Call:

A. Jeremiah's call occurred around 626 B.C. under the reign of King Josiah.

B. Jeremiah as a type of Christ:

1. The persecutions Jeremiah endured while he prophesied to the nation of Judah made him appear to be the fulfillment of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:3, because he was "a man of sorrows."
2. However, Jeremiah's sufferings were just another foreshadowing of the Messiah's ultimate sufferings for our sins.

## **Interpretation** (translation from the Hebrew):

C. v.4—*"Now came the Word of Yahweh to me saying:"*

1. The Word of God is personified in this phrase in the picture of its coming to Jeremiah, rather than just hearing it.
2. This is the most common way a prophetic call is made in the OT (Ez 1:3; Jonah 1:1; Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1).

D. v.5—*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you and before you were born I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations."*

1. Like Samson in Judges 13:5, who was dedicated to the Lord before birth, God declares that Jeremiah has also been set apart before birth to serve God.
2. "formed you" (*yazar*) is a verb that connotes God's creative act (Gen. 2:7; Ps 119:73).
3. "knew you" (*yadah*) is a verb that connotes intimate knowledge and a special relationship. The sense that the NIV translates it "chosen" is seen in Gen 18:19 where God says that He has "chosen" Abraham to be a great nation (also see Amos 3:2).
4. The word "prophet" (*na'vi*) literally means "one who has been called."

E. v.6—*"Then I said, 'Oh Lord Yahweh, behold I do not know how to speak for I am a youth.'"*

1. Jeremiah's protest to his calling parallels Moses' call (Ex. 3) and his inability to "speak" is like Moses in Ex. 4:10.
2. However, where Moses incurs God's wrath, here Jeremiah is reassured.

F. v.7—*"But Yahweh said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am a youth,' for you will go to all to whom I send you and whatever I command you, you will speak.'"*

1. The youthfulness of Jeremiah is not a problem for God who qualifies those He calls.
2. Paul's words in 1 Tim 4:12 are appropriate for such a calling as this.

G. v.8—*"Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you; I will deliver you," says Yahweh."*

1. God's reassurance is again parallel to what He tells Moses in Ex 3:12.
2. Protection is promised, not peace. There will be persecution, but God will deliver Jeremiah.

H. v.9—*"Then Yahweh put forth His hand and touched my mouth and Yahweh said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.'"*

1. The touching of the mouth is reminiscent of Isaiah's call (Isa. 6) without the cleansing of sins prior to preaching.
2. God puts the words into a prophet's mouth since it comes from Him alone (Ex 4:15; Num 22:38; Dt 18:18, etc)

I. v.10—*"See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."*

1. These phrases of judgment-salvation, Law and Gospel, are a summary of the book of Jeremiah as a whole.
2. The first two verbs are negative, which is the proclamation of the Law.
3. The last pair is positive, showing the Gospel and the promised restoration of God's people after the exile.