Jeremiah
Jer 1:4-10
SS Lesson for 07/16/2017

Devotional Scripture: Eph 4:11-16

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews the call and empowerment even before birth of Jeremiah. The study's aim is to establish that a call from God comes with the power to carry it out. The study's application is to stress obeying God’s call is rarely easy, but it will always be successful in accomplishing what God requires in the call.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Jer 1:7

But the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The Book of Jeremiah opens by introducing its readers to the prophet. His background and call into the prophetic ministry set the stage for the rest of his book.

1:1. Jeremiah gives information on his family background (v. 1) during the time he ministered (vv. 2-3). He was one of the priests, descended from the priestly line of Aaron. His father, Hilkiah, was probably not the high priest Hilkiah who discovered the copy of the Law during the time of Josiah (2 Kings 22:2-14). The name “Hilkiah” was evidently a common name given to several men in the Old Testament who were priests or Levites (1 Chron. 6:45-46; 26:10-11; 2 Chron. 34:9-22; Neh. 12:7; Jer. 1:1). Jeremiah’s hometown was Anathoth which was in the territory of Benjamin. The village of Anathoth was about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. The territory of Benjamin bordered the territory of Judah, and the dividing line extended roughly east to west and passed beside Jerusalem (cf. Josh. 18:15-16). Anathoth was a city allocated by Joshua to the priests (Josh. 21:15-19). Solomon exiled Abiathar the priest to Anathoth for supporting Adonijah as David’s successor (1 Kings 1:7; 2:26-27).

1:2-3. Jeremiah was born a priest, but began functioning as a prophet when he received the word of the Lord. A prophet was one through whom God spoke directly to His people. God’s call of Jeremiah came in the 13th year of the reign of Josiah. Josiah became king of Judah in 640 B.C., so his 13th year was 627 B.C. Josiah was the last righteous king of Judah. After his untimely death in 609 B.C., every king who ascended Judah’s throne was unworthy of the task. Jeremiah continued as God’s spokesman down to the fifth month of the 11th year of Zedekiah. That date was July-August 586 B.C. Thus Jeremiah’s ministry lasted at least 41 years. However, this verse probably refers to Jeremiah’s ministry to the nation of Judah until the people of Jerusalem went into exile because 39:11-44:30 records events of Jeremiah’s ministry that occurred after August 586.

1:4-5. God’s call of Jeremiah as a prophet, though brief, contained a message designed to motivate him for his task. God revealed that His selection of Jeremiah as a prophet had occurred before he had even been formed... in the womb. The word knew (yāḏā‘) means far more than intellectual knowledge. It was used of the intimate relations experienced by a husband and wife (“lay,” Gen. 4:1) and conveyed the sense of a close personal relationship (“chosen,” Amos 3:2) and protection (“watches over,” Ps. 1:6). Before Jeremiah was conceived God had singled him out to be His spokesman to Israel. Jeremiah had been set... apart for this ministry. The verb translated “set apart” (qāḏāš) means setting something or someone apart for a specific use. Individuals or objects “set apart” (or sanctified or made holy) for use by God included the Sabbath Day (Ex. 16:23; 20:8), the tabernacle and its furnishings (Ex. 29:44; 40:9), and the priests (Ex. 29:1; 30:30). God had marked Jeremiah from conception and reserved him for a special task. He was appointed to be a prophet to the nations. Though Jeremiah proclaimed God’s Word to Judah (chaps. 2-45), his ministry as God’s spokesman extended beyond Judah to Gentile nations (chaps. 46-51).

1:6. Jeremiah responded to God’s appointment with a measure of self-doubt. He first objected that he did not know how to speak. Jeremiah was not claiming that he was physically unable to talk. He was claiming a lack of eloquence and speaking ability required for such a public ministry. He also objected that he was only a child (na‘ar). This word was used of infants (Ex. 2:6; 1 Sam. 4:21) and of young men (Gen. 14:24). Jeremiah’s age is not given, but possibly he was in his late teens or early 20s at this time. By using the term “child” Jeremiah was emphasizing his lack of experience. He felt ill-prepared to be God’s ambassador to the nations.

1:7-10. God gave three answers to Jeremiah’s objections. First, He stressed the authority under which Jeremiah was to act. Jeremiah should not use inexperience as an excuse for evading his task. He would
have no choice in the selection of his audience or his message. Rather, he was to go to everyone to whom God sent him and say whatever God commanded. Jeremiah did not have to be an eloquent elder statesman—he was simply to be a faithful messenger. Second, God stressed that He would protect the future prophet. Evidently Jeremiah was afraid for his personal safety. Certainly his fears were based on his awareness of the times because the people did try to get rid of him (cf. 11:18-23; 12:6; 20:1-2; 26:11; 37:15-16; 38:4-6). Yet God told Jeremiah not to be afraid of them, because He would be on his side. The people would try to kill Jeremiah, but God promised to rescue him. Third, God showed Jeremiah the source of his message. Jeremiah’s call must have come in the form of a vision (cf. Ezek. 1:1) because he noted that the Lord reached out His hand to touch Jeremiah’s mouth. This visible manifestation of God was His object lesson to tell Jeremiah that the Lord Himself would put His words in Jeremiah’s mouth. Jeremiah need not worry what to say; God would provide the very words he would speak. God then summarized the content of Jeremiah’s message (Jer. 1:10). It would be a message of both judgment and blessing to nations and kingdoms. God used two metaphors to describe Jeremiah’s mission (cf. 31:28 for a later use of the same two metaphors). Comparing Jeremiah to a farmer, God said he would uproot (announce judgment) and... plant (announce blessing). Comparing Jeremiah to an architect, God said he would tear down... destroy, and overthrow (pronounce judgment) and build (pronounce blessing).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Unlike Isaiah, who readily volunteered for his prophetic ministry, Jeremiah was reluctant to sign on to the Lord’s plan for him. When the Lord initially spoke to him, Jeremiah claimed he could not speak for the Lord because he was a mere “child” (Jer. 1:6). The word for “child” could be used for anyone from infancy to young adulthood, but “it is generally believed that Jeremiah was between twenty and twenty-five when his call came to him” (Jensen, Jeremiah and Lamentations, Moody). Although he was a priest, relatively speaking, he was a child as far as experience was concerned, for priestly service apparently began at age thirty (cf. Num. 4:3, 30). The Lord had already told Jeremiah that He had ordained him as a prophet to the nations even before his birth (Jer. 1:5). God knew exactly what He was doing, and Jeremiah could trust Him. Jeremiah’s task was really quite simple. He was to go where the Lord sent him and speak what the Lord commanded him. He did not need to concern himself with eloquent words and persuasive speech. Jeremiah was to obey the Lord, and the Lord would take care of the rest. To argue with God is to call into question His wisdom as well as His power. Jeremiah was focused on his own inabilities, much as Moses was when the Lord spoke to him at the burning bush (Exod. 3-4). He saw what he was incapable of doing rather than recognize what God is like. God is all-powerful; He does not depend on the meager strength of His servants. God is all-knowing; He does not choose only those who have years of experience in human endeavors. God knows the future, and He knows us better than we do. Like Jeremiah, we might not be the most experienced, the most brilliant, or the most gifted of God’s people, but that is not what God wants from us anyway. He wants us to simply go where He wants us to go and speak what He tells us to speak, and He has not left us in the dark as to what that involves. We do not have to come up with something new and different and appealing. He has given us the message; it is called the gospel. And He has given us the strength and power to proclaim it through the Holy Spirit. Jeremiah's message was quite different from the one God calls us to deliver. His message was largely one of judgment. He foresaw the Babylonian conquest of Judah and was to urge his people to surrender. After his initial reluctance, Jeremiah submitted to the Lord and never turned back. He understood what God called him to do, and he faithfully carried out his mission. He suffered greatly for his obedience to God in declaring God's message. "Jeremiah believed passionately that God had spoken to him. When his life was at stake, the only defense he offered was, The Lord sent me to prophesy’ [Jer. 26:12]” (Blackwood, Jeremiah, Word). God has spoken to us and given us a great commission. Can we, even in the face of death, confidently say, "The Lord sent me to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ"?

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” When children are asked that question, their answers are remarkably consistent. Occupations such as doctor, athlete, teacher, dancer, police officer, firefighter, scientist, musician, actor, and nurse are common responses. Regional differences also affect the choices. A child growing up in Silicon Valley might want to be a video-game designer while a child from rural Wisconsin may aspire to be a dairy farmer. Of course, childhood fantasy becomes a consideration with the appearance of such goals as becoming a princess, a superhero, a dinosaur, a mermaid, etc. As people grow older, we expect the answers to
that question to become more realistic and not grounded in fantasy. We would look with more than a little surprise at a 19-year-old who still wants to be a superhero! We probably can recall being asked this same question many times as children, and our responses became more realistic as the years passed. But how many who are reading this now were ever told specifically and honestly, “When you reach adulthood, your career will be that of a _____”? As far-fetched as this may sound, something of the sort did happen to a young man named Jeremiah. He was not asked what he wanted to be; he was told! Jeremiah came from a priestly background (Jeremiah 1:1), but God had other plans for him.

The prophet Jeremiah began his ministry “in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah” (Jeremiah 1:2). By modern reckoning, that was about 626 BC. These times were increasingly chaotic in the southern kingdom of Judah. Although the Assyrian threat—which resulted in the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:18)—no longer existed, it was being replaced by Babylonian aggression. Godliness and holiness on the part of the Judeans, not military might, was the key to staving off disaster. Only reliance on and dedication to the true God would turn aside the threat of foreign invasion. In that regard, things may have looked hopeful for a time because of godly King Josiah’s dedication to the Lord (2 Chronicles 34:1-35:19). But the spiritual condition of Judah took a quick and fatal turn for the worse after he died in 609 BC. Four ungodly kings followed him, the final one being his son Zedekiah. It was he who was on the throne when the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem and destroyed Solomon’s great temple in 586 BC (2 Kings 24:18-25:7; Jeremiah 1:3). Another issue of background is Jeremiah’s hometown of Anathoth (Jeremiah 1:1). This village was located in the tribal territory of Benjamin, about three miles north-northeast of Jerusalem. Anathoth was a Levite town, a convenient residence for workers in the Jerusalem temple. As a resident of this town, Jeremiah undoubtedly thought he would follow in his father’s footsteps in terms of career. But God had other plans.

**Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

**God’s Ordination (Jer 1:4-5)**

4 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying:
5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

**By God’s Word (4)**

*Ordained word to make known God’s revelation (Rom 16:25-27)*

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—
27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

*Ordained word of redemption (Eph 1:7-8)*

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

*Ordained word to be spread through the Church (Eph 3:10)*

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

*Ordained word to reveal transgressions until Jesus came (Gal 3:19)*

19 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.
**By God’s Sanctification (5)**

_Sanctification that makes one blameless (1 Thess 5:23)_

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

_Sanctification through the blood of Jesus (Heb 9:13-14)_

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

_Sanctification that sets apart Jesus as Lord in our heart (1 Peter 3:15)_

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

_Sanctification that leads to presenting ourselves as a slave to God (Rom 6:19)_

19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

_Sanctification that leads to salvation (2 Thess 2:13)_

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

**God’s Enablement (Jer 1:6-8)**

6 Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”
7 But the Lord said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth.' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.
8 Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the Lord.

**Enabled guidance (6-7)**

_Guidance that is part of God’s plan for our life (Jer 29:11)_

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

_Guidance into truth (John 16:13-15)_

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

_Guidance by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:18)_

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

_Guidance that represents we are a child of God (Rom 8:14)_

14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
Enabled boldness (8)

Boldness because of having the help of God (1 Thess 2:2)

2 We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.

Boldness because God will be with us (Dan 3:16-18)

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Boldness because of faith in God (Luke 8:24-25)

24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 25 "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Boldness because of the love of God (Rom 8:37-39)

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Boldness because of dependence on God (2 Cor 1:9)

9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

Boldness because of the competence of God (2 Cor 3:5)

5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

God’s Endowment (Jer 1:9-10)

9 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. 10 See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant."

Endowed message (9)

A message that guides and protects (Ps 32:8)

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

A message that counsels (Ps 73:23-25)

3 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

A message that teaches what is best (Isa 48:17)

17 This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go."
A message that is binding (Heb 2:2-3)

2 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

**Endowed mission (10)**

**A mission to strengthen and encourage faith (1 Thess 3:2)**

2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.

**A mission to carry on the work of the Lord (1 Cor 16:10)**

10 If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am.

**A mission given with power and authority (Luke 9:1-2)**

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

**A mission that is like lambs among wolves (Luke 10:3)**

3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

**Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

**Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable**

**Verse 1**

The "words" (Heb. debarim, writings, prophecies, deeds, and events of his life) that follow are those of Jeremiah (meaning Yahweh founds, establishes, exalts, throws down, hurls, or loosens [the womb]). This was a common name in Israel. The Old Testament refers to many different individuals who bore it. His father was Hilkiah (also a common name), who may or may not have been the high priest who found the book of the Law in the temple during Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 22:3-13). Jeremiah's father was a priest who lived in Anathoth, a village three miles northeast of Jerusalem in the territory of Benjamin where other priests also lived (cf. Joshua 21:15-19). Thus Jeremiah was a priest by ancestry. The book never refers to him as serving as a priest, and he was often a severe critic of the Levitical priests. According to one writer, the words "to whom the word of the Lord came," and similar phrases, occur 157 times in Jeremiah out of a total of 349 times in the entire Old Testament. [Note: James G. S. S. Thomson, The Old Testament View of Revelation, pp60-61. This is about 45 percent of its occurrences.]

**Verses 1-3**

A. The introduction of Jeremiah 1:1-3

Most of the prophetic books begin with some indication of authorship and date to put them in their historical contexts, and this is true of the Book of Jeremiah.

**Verse 2**


**Verse 3**

Jeremiah also received prophecies from the Lord during the reign of King Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.), and until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.)-namely, 586 B.C. even until the exile of the residents of Jerusalem began in the fifth month of 586 B.C. The writer evidently omitted Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin from this list of kings because their reigns each lasted only three months, in 609,598-597 B.C. respectively.
"There is particular significance in the reference to the deportation (galut) of Jerusalem. This event was the climax to Jeremiah"s preaching and a demonstration of his authenticity as a genuine prophet of Yahweh, for in that event the basic thrust of his prophecy was fulfilled." [Note: Thompson, p141.]

We know from elsewhere in the book that Jeremiah also prophesied after the fall of Jerusalem (cf. chs40-44). So the dates in this verse fix the period of Jeremiah"s main ministry and set it in a historical context.

"We only begin to understand the power of Jeremiah"s book if we grasp something of the chaos of his world." [Note: Craigie, p5.]

This preface sets the stage for what follows.

**Verse 4**

The prophet now began speaking to his readers and telling them what the Lord had said to him. Throughout this book, an indication that the Lord had told Jeremiah something is often the sign of a new pericope, as here (cf. Jeremiah 1:11; Jeremiah 1:13; Jeremiah 2:1; Jeremiah 2:4; Jeremiah 3:6; Jeremiah 3:11; Jeremiah 4:3; Jeremiah 4:27; et al.). These references are not the only indicators of a new section of text, but they usually indicate the beginning or ending of a section when they appear.

Verses 4-10

1. The promise of divine enablement 1:4-10

Verses 4-19

B. The call of Jeremiah 1:4-19

This account of Jeremiah"s call prepares the reader for the prophet"s ministry that unfolds beginning in chapter2. The events recorded here prepared Jeremiah for that ministry, a ministry that frequently discouraged him and made him wish that God had never called him.

**Verse 5**

Yahweh knew (Heb. yada”), committed Himself to Jeremiah before He had formed him in his mother"s womb (cf. Genesis 4:1; Psalm 1:6; Hosea 4:1; Amos 3:2). Jeremiah existed as a human being during his gestation period (cf. Psalm 139:13). God had set him aside (Heb. hiqdish) from all other uses for prophetic ministry even before his birth (cf. Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1-3; Amos 7:10-17). His prophetic ministry would involve many nations (chs46-51), not just Judah (chs2-45).

"The thought that his very existence was a conscious part of divine purpose and not an incidental biological occurrence must have given him a special sense of destiny. This in turn doubtless contributed to his determination to fulfil his prophetic mission regardless of personal considerations." [Note: Harrison, Jeremiah and . . ., pp50-51.]

"God identified Himself to be sovereign over Jeremiah in that He (1) foreknew Jeremiah before he was born, (2) had caused him to be born, and (3) had separated him for a holy service. On this basis, He also had the sovereign prerogative to appoint Jeremiah to be a prophet." [Note: Irving L. Jensen, Jeremiah and Lamentations , p19.]

**Verse 6**

When the Lord revealed his calling to him, Jeremiah expressed dismay: first, because he was still a youth, and second, because he had not yet learned how to speak confidently and effectively.

Jeremiah"s age at his call is not clear except that he was a youth (Heb. na’ar, a word that elsewhere in the Old Testament describes children through young men; cf. Genesis 14:24; Genesis 22:3; Genesis 34:19; Exodus 2:6; Exodus 33:11; 1 Samuel 4:21; Judges 8:14). Jeremiah was probably about20 years old. The estimates of several reliable commentators range from about16 to25 years old.

Jeremiah"s response to his call reveals the first of his many similarities to Moses (cf. Exodus 4:1-17). The people to whom they spoke did not believe either prophet, and both men claimed to be inadequate as speakers, to name only two likenesses. Jeremiah”s contemporaries could very well have mistaken him for "the prophet like Moses," which Moses predicted would come after himself ( Deuteronomy 18:18).

**Verse 7**

The Lord refused to accept Jeremiah"s reasons for resisting his call. It did not matter that he was young and inexperienced, because the Lord had called him. He would go where God sent him and say what God told him to say.
Verse 8

He was not to fear the response of his audience, because the Lord promised to be with him and to deliver him from his threatening hearers (cf. Genesis 15:1; Numbers 21:34; Deuteronomy 3:2; Deuteronomy 31:6; Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:9; Daniel 10:12; Daniel 10:19; Matthew 28:20; Luke 1:30; Luke 5:10; Acts 27:24). The Lord always supports the servants whom He sends on His missions (cf. Exodus 3:12; Joshua 1:1-9; Matthew 28:19-20; et al.).

Verse 9

By stretching out His hand and touching Jeremiah’s mouth, the Lord symbolized the transfer of His words to the prophet’s mouth (cf. Deuteronomy 18:18). He also explained the meaning of His act. This was a powerful way of visualizing that the Lord Himself would participate in all that Jeremiah would undertake (cf. Isaiah 6:6-7; Ezekiel 3:1-3).

God uses ordinary people to accomplish His extraordinary work if they trust in Him in spite of their fears, obey Him in spite of their inexperience, and proclaim His Word in spite of their feelings of inadequacy. [Note: Charles H. Dyer, in The Old Testament Explorer, p591.]

"The word of God is a power that carries out His will, and accomplishes that whereto He sends it, Isa. Leviticus 10 ff. Against this power nothing earthly can stand; it is a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces, xxiii29." [Note: Keil, 1:42.]

Verse 10

The Lord appointed Jeremiah to a position of authority over the nations in the sense that he would announce God’s will for them. He would announce both good news and bad, oracles of judgment and messages of comfort and encouragement. The verbs in this verse anticipate the whole message of this book, as one might expect in an introduction. [Note: See Hobart E. Freeman, An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets, p243-44.] Four of them are destructive, and only two are constructive, reflecting the predominantly negative emphasis of Jeremiah’s ministry. The Lord compared Jeremiah’s work to that of two types of workers: a farmer and an architect.

"This is a paradigm of the spiritual life, for God has first to remove the sin before the sinner can begin to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:15; 2 Peter 3:18)." [Note: Harrison, Jeremiah and ... , p50. See also Kenneth L. Barker, "Jeremiah’s Ministry and Ours," Bibliotheca Sacra127:507 (July 1970):223-31.]

"... the Bible gives us a realistic message that Jeremiah preached into his own days, a message I am convinced the church today must preach if is to be any help in the post-Christian world." [Note: Schaeffer, p36.]

"First, we may say that there is a time, and ours is such a time, when a negative message is needed before anything positive can begin. There must first be the message of judgment, the tearing down. There are times, and Jeremiah's day and ours are such times, when we cannot expect a constructive revolution if we begin by overemphasizing the positive message....

Second, with love we must face squarely the fact that our culture really is under the judgment of God. We must not heal the sickness lightly. We must emphasize the reality." [Note: Ibid, pp70, 71.]

"What we are is God's gift to us; what we do with it is our gift to Him." [Note: Warren W. Wiersbe, "Jeremiah", in The Bible Exposition Commentary/Prophets, p77.]

Verse 11

The Lord directed the prophet to observe the branch of an almond tree. The almond tree is distinctive, as it is the first tree to blossom in the spring in Israel. Many almond trees still grow in Israel, even in the area of old Anathoth, so the tree was probably common to Jeremiah.

Verse 11-12

The vision of the almond tree:11-12

Verses 11-19

2. Two confirming visions:11-19

The Lord gave Jeremiah two visions to help him appreciate the nature of his calling, two witnesses to his calling. The first one stresses the ultimate effectiveness of his ministry and the second its negative emphasis. The first deals with the time of judgment and the second with the direction and nature of it.
Verse 12
Yahweh explained that He would watch over His word to perform it.

"In a day when the word of the Lord seemed to be forgotten entirely, Jehovah declared, "I watch over My word to perform it."" [Note: G. Campbell Morgan, An Exposition of the Whole Bible, p321.]

The connection with the almond branch is a play on words. "Almond" is *shaqed* in Hebrew, which also means "awake," and "watching" is *shoqed*. The meaning seems to be that just as the blooming of the almond branch announced that spring was near, so the prophet’s word would herald the imminence of what he predicted. The NEB translated the last part of the Lord”s statement in this verse, "I am early on the watch to carry out my purpose."

"Jeremiah”s vision of the "awake tree" reminded him that God was awake and watching over His word to make sure it came to pass." [Note: Dyer, " Jeremiah ", p1131.]

These two verses summarize a central theme of Jeremiah: the inevitable fulfillment of Yahweh”s announcements concerning Judah and the nations.

Verse 13
The Lord directed Jeremiah to view a boiling pot (a cauldron used for cooking or washing, Heb. *sir*) that was tipped so that it was about to pour its contents out toward the south. The Hebrew clarifies that a strong wind was blowing, thus making the fire under the pot hot, and causing it to boil over.

Verses 13-19
The vision of the boiling pot1:13-19
This vision may have come to Jeremiah immediately after the preceding one or at some other time.

Verse 14
The Lord explained that the contents of the boiling pot represented an evil that would overflow upon all the inhabitants of Judah from the north. Many of the commentators, and I, believe this refers to Babylon (cf. Jeremiah 25:9; Jeremiah 39), but a few think it refers to the Scythians. [Note: See Harrison, Introduction to . . ., pp803-4; Feinberg, pp361-62; or Graybill, p657, for further discussion of the foe from the north.] The major threat to Judah when Jeremiah began his ministry was Assyria, but Assyria soon declined and Neo-Babylonia took its place. Whereas Babylon (and Assyria) lay to the northeast of Palestine, its invading armies would descend from the north, since the Arabian Desert kept them from advancing directly from the east.

Verse 15
The evil from the north would be many families (peoples) of the kingdoms of the north; it would be a massive invasion. These enemies would invade Judah, besiege Jerusalem, and seek to conquer and rule the land. "Setting a throne" at the gates of Jerusalem is a figure for establishing sovereignty over Jerusalem.

Verse 16
The Lord would use these invaders to judge the Judahites for their wickedness, namely: forsaking the Lord, and worshipping other gods-plus the idols they made with their own hands. These sins demonstrated Judah”s covenant unfaithfulness for which God had promised curses ( Leviticus 26:14-39; Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

Verse 17
Jeremiah was to get to work and announce all of the Lord”s messages to His people (cf. Exodus 12:11; 2 Kings 4:29; 2 Kings 9:1; Luke 12:35; Ephesians 6:14; 1 Peter 1:13). He was not to let fear discourage him from being obedient (cf. Deuteronomy 31:6-8; Joshua 1:6-9; Ephesians 6:10-14), because if he did, the Lord would really give him something to fear. The disobedient believer not only fears people, but he or she also has God to fear because God becomes his or her adversary (cf. Jeremiah 12:5-6; Jeremiah 20:9).

Verse 18
The Lord promised that none of the people of Judah—the kings, the princes, the priests, or the ordinary citizens—would be able to destroy Jeremiah. He would make Jeremiah as impregnable as a fortress, as irresistible as a fortified city, as strong as an iron pillar, and as resistant to attack as a bronze wall. [Note: Thompson, p157.] Jeremiah would not be popular in his day. His greatness was "not his fame, but his faithfulness." [Note: Fred M. Wood, Fire in My Bones, p24.]

Verse 19
The people of Judah would fight him and try to destroy him, but the Lord promised again to be with Jeremiah and to protect his life (cf. Jeremiah 1:8). The Lord would "rescue" him, as He had rescued the Israelites in the Exodus (cf. Exodus 3:8; Exodus 18:4; Exodus 18:8-10; et al.).

"... if you are a Christian looking for an easy ministry in a post-Christian culture where Christians are a minority, you are unrealistic in your outlook. It was not to be so in Jeremiah’s day, and it cannot be so in a day like our own." [Note: Schaeffer, p37.]

"For Jeremiah as for us, his [God’s] way in general is not to stop the fight but to stand by the fighter." [Note: Kidner, p28.]

"Prophets are almost extinct in the religious world today. The modern church is a "non-prophet" organization." [Note: Vance Havner, cited by Dennis J. Hester, compiler, in The Vance Havner Quotebook, p179.]

"The account of the vocation in Jeremiah 1 has set the stage for reading with understanding the chapters of the book that follow. But now that the stage has been set, the reader must be careful not to forget this account of vocation, for its memory will return to haunt the prophet in later years (and subsequent chapters). The memory will emerge openly in the "Confessions" that ensue from later trials, but still its shadow is felt in the last years of the prophet’s life as a refugee in Egypt, cut off from the land in which the call came." [Note: Craigie, p18.]

Jeremiah’s calling was not really that unusual. God has also chosen every Christian before the foundation of the world (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4). He has chosen us to follow Him faithfully (1 Corinthians 6:20). He has also called every Christian to announce His Word (Matthew 28:19). He has called us to follow Him as He leads us through life by His Spirit (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:25). And He has promised to be with us, and to preserve us eternally, even though we live as aliens and strangers in a hostile world (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 8:31-39; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 1 Peter 2:11-12).

(Adapted from URL:http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/jeremiah-1.html#1)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

With certain tasks, one’s ability to go it alone without any assistance is the measure of success. A would-be pilot must fly his or her plane solo. A young driver takes great pride in being able to drive to and from school or work without Mom or Dad riding along. From youth, it seems, to do something “all by myself” becomes the standard of success in many areas of life. In contrast, God said that his presence, his words, and his purpose were to identify Jeremiah’s ministry. Never would there be a time when he would have to go solo, even as he suffered perhaps more persecution and harassment than any other prophet in the Old Testament. “No solos” can be a difficult concept to accept and apply in many areas of one’s life, but it is absolutely vital to apply in our service for the Lord. Let us remember that there was never a self-made prophet or a self-made apostle. And there are no self-made servants of Jesus in the twenty-first century. We must draw our strength from the Lord! A go-it-alone philosophy led humanity into the tragedy of sin in the Garden of Eden, the consequences of which still reverberate. If the temptation to “fly solo” spiritually grows as you gain skills and knowledge with the passing years, remember: “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6).

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. We are born with an assignment from God (Jer. 1:4-5)
2. Age is not a factor in whom God calls. Therefore, it is not an excuse (vss. 6-7)
3. There is no reason to fear man when we are sent by God. His protection covers us (vs. 8)
4. God sends people who will speak His words, not their own (vs. 9)
5. God gives us the authority to speak against evil and correct it (vs. 10)
6. God has the authority to give warnings, judgments, and restoration