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Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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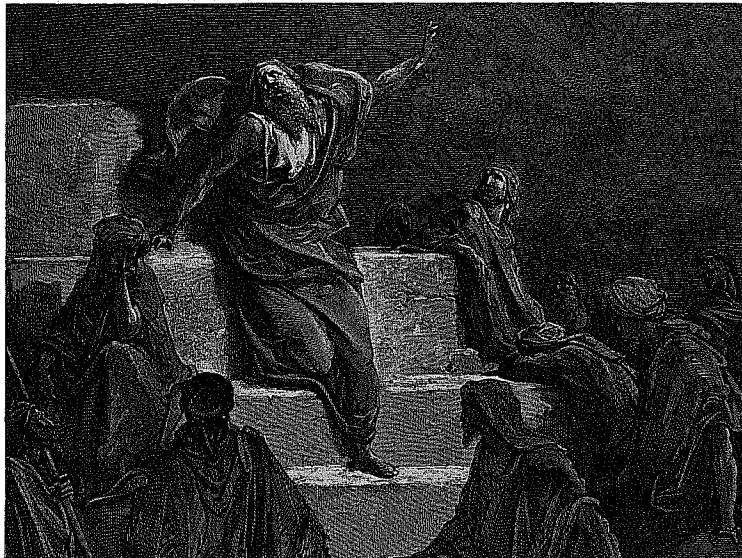
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The Weeping Prophet



by Harold L. Willmington

Among the thousands of mourners attending King Josiah's state funeral in Jerusalem, no one was probably more unnoticed, unhappy, or unsettled than a young married son of a priest from the city of Anathoth. He was unnoticed because of his youth, unhappy because of Josiah's death, and unsettled because God had previously called him to assume the office of a prophet. Never had there been a more unwilling candidate. His timid protests, however, were of no avail. To the contrary, while he might pass unnoticed in the Judean crowds, almighty God had, even from the womb, closely observed and sanctified this young man for special service.

Such was the condition of Jeremiah in the year 610 B.C. After a long, hard, and hectic ministry, Jeremiah is forced into Egypt against his will by his own countrymen. In addition to the Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, the weeping prophet could have written an autobiography entitled, *Head Honchos Who Have Heard Me*, for he prophesied under Judah's final four kings, plus Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian monarch, and finally Gedaliah and Johanan, Judah's two post-captivity governors.

Jeremiah could see the terrible storm of judgment coming and actually

feel its awful blast. But Judah would not hear him or heed his words of warning. He spent his long days crusading, comforting, and condemning. His crusade was directed toward Jerusalem, his comfort toward the remnant already in captivity, and his condemnation toward the nine pagan Gentile nations surrounding Judah. He proclaimed the wickedness of man and the wrath of God. Along with these terrible terms came the weeping. No other biblical prophet ever said more stern things against Judah or shed more bitter tears over its people than did Jeremiah.

In ancient history a rich king once inquired of his seer whether or not he should declare war upon another king. After a session of pretended crystal ball gazing, the seer replied, "O King, if you attack, a great empire will be destroyed."

Satisfied, the monarch moved his troops, only to be decidedly defeated! In defending his prophecy the seer exclaimed, "You note I only predicted your attack would destroy a great kingdom. I did not specify which kingdom it would be!" One can immediately see the worthlessness of this kind of prophecy, which is in reality no prophecy at all.

What a contrast is seen as one considers Jeremiah's predictions. Instead of being vague and worthless, his are pointed, precise, and if heeded, profitable to all involved. In matters of preciseness, his prophecy concerning

the Babylonian captivity is one of Scripture's most amazing. Not only did he foretell the captivity itself, but specified the time element in the captivity (70 years) and the Jewish return from the captivity. Perhaps the most exciting of all, however, was his New Covenant prophecy, which promised that redeemed Israel will someday, yet in the future, live on God's soil, indwelt by God's Spirit, and ruled over by God's Son.

Perhaps no other pre-Calvary prophet suffered as much for God as did Jeremiah. The truth is, in many ways his sufferings foreshadowed the sufferings of the Saviour. Both Jeremiah and Jesus were mistreated by their own families (Jer. 12:6; John 7:5). Both were hated by the religious world (Jer. 26:7-9; John 11:47-53). Both were plotted against by the citizens of their own hometowns (Jer. 11:21; Luke 4:28-30). Both were denounced by the synagogue leaders of their day (Jer. 20:1-2; John 18:13, 24). Both wept over the city of Jerusalem (Jer. 9:1; Luke 19:41). Both were accused falsely and beaten (Jer. 37:12-15; Matt. 26:65-67; 27:26).

Were Jeremiah's sufferings because of his stand for God worth it? They were indeed. Surely his conclusion would have been as Paul's: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). ■