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PURPOSE

The Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology (CJET) is designed to promote scholarly study and research, to provide a forum for the expression of facts, ideas, and opinions from a Caribbean evangelical theological perspective, and to stimulate the application of this research to the Caribbean region.

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***DIVINE PURPOSE
& PROPHECY:
JEREMIAH 1: 1-19***

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EXEGETICAL OUTLINE

- I. Superscription - 1:1-3
- II. The Call - 1:4-10
- III. The Signs - 1:11-16
- IV. The Assurance - 1:17-19

I. Superscription - 1:1-3

¹ *The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, who was one of the priests from Anathoth, in the region of Benjamin,* ² *to whom the Word of Yahweh came in the days of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.* ³ *And it came in the days of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleven year reign of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the removal of Jerusalem in the fifth month.*

These verses form an editor's preface to the book of Jeremiah, with notable parallels in other prophetic books, such as Isaiah (1:1), Hosea (1:1), and Amos (1:1). The verses also provide us with three pieces of information which are important to understanding the book as a whole: Some personal information about Jeremiah, the source of his messages, and the period during which he exercised his ministry.¹

¹J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980), 139.

The book is introduced as the “words of Jeremiah” (דְּבָרֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ). This is not the usual introduction for a prophetic book. The more usual formula for the title of a prophecy is “the word of the LORD.” Here the term ‘words’ (from דְּבָרִים) has a connotation broad enough to include both the prophecies and the events of Jeremiah’s life. The more usual introductory phrase follows in v.2.² “Words of Jeremiah” here imply that regardless of the differences in personal pronouns that would be used in the text, the material is distinctively from Jeremiah, or about his ministry. There is to be no doubt that the book discloses information from the life and ministry of Jeremiah the prophet that was pertinent for the faith of Israel.

The Septuagint superscription begins τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὃ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ Ἰερεμίου, which appears to be an interpretive translation of the Hebrew text. This is quite consistent with v. 2 of the Masoretic Text, which identifies Yahweh as the source of the words that Jeremiah spoke. The focus here is definitely that God is at work in the experience of the man Jeremiah. According to McKane, the Septuagint “has accommodated Jer. 1:1 to a more common type of superscription.”³ Those he speaks about include that of Hosea (1:1), Micah (1:1), Zephaniah (1:1), and Joel (1:1).

²Charles L. Fienberg, “Jeremiah,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, General Editor, Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976-1992), [CD]. The style of the book of Jeremiah is also found in those of Nehemiah, Ecclesiastes, and Amos.

³William McKane, *Jeremiah*, I-XXV vol. 1, *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh: T. & T Clark Ltd., n.d.), 2.

Jeremiah is identified as the son of Hilkiah, a priest from Anathoth, a city of Benjamin. This identifies Jeremiah as a priest by lineage. Anathoth “is first mentioned as the home of some of the bodyguards of David, and later Abiathar the priest was exiled there. According to Isaiah 10:30, the city was on the route of the Assyrian invasion of Palestine but it was not destroyed.”⁴

Verses 2 and 3, in particular, focus on the source of Jeremiah’s prophecies, as well as the duration of his ministry. Interestingly, the phrase “to whom Yahweh’s word came” (הִיָּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו), or its equivalent, is a technical term indicating the beginning of prophetic activity. What follows reflects the position of Yahweh. Holladay, in commenting on it notes that, “הִיָּה does not mean ‘come,’ strictly speaking, but ‘happen, occur,’ and דְבַר does not mean ‘word’ alone but more generally ‘revelatory activity.’”⁵ To appreciate the substance of the book, therefore, it is important to understand that both Jeremiah’s words and his experiences were part and parcel of his message.⁶

⁴John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, eds. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 642.

⁵William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25*, edited by Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 17.

⁶I appreciate Craigie’s conservative stance in his treatment of Jeremiah. Peter C. Craigie, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 161. Interestingly, Brueggemann, who is not a conservative, shares similar sentiments in his book, *To Pluck up, To Tear Down: Jeremiah 1-25*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 20.

The date given for the call of Jeremiah is “the thirteenth year of Josiah.” The same date is given in 25:3, and “there can be little doubt that it is intended as the year of Jeremiah’s call.”⁷ The phrase “until the removal of Jerusalem” provides the end towards which the focus of Jeremiah’s ministry moves. “This is more than a chronological reference. It is an awesome and dreadful formula. It is a clue to the intent of Yahweh’s word and a signal about the nature of the book of Jeremiah.”⁸

II. The Call - 1:4-10

⁴ And the Word of Yahweh came to me saying, ⁵ before I formed you in the womb I knew you and before I brought you forth from the womb of your mother, I ordained you. A prophet to the nations I have set you. ⁶ And I responded, “Alas, Lord, Yahweh, behold, I do not know how to speak because I am a young boy.” ⁷ And Yahweh said to me, “Do not say that I am a young boy, because wherever I shall send you, you shall go. And all that I command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Do not be afraid of their faces, because I am with you to deliver you,” declares Yahweh. ⁹ And Yahweh stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and Yahweh said, “See I put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ Look, I set you this day 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.”

The call of Jeremiah takes the form of a dialogue between God and the prophet. It encompasses “Jeremiah’s awareness that he had been

⁷See McKane’s insightful discussion of this matter in *Jeremiah* vol. 1 I-XXV, 3.

⁸Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, 21.

predestined for the prophetic office before his birth; the overruling of his objections and the promise of divine aid; and the placing of the divine word in his mouth.”⁹ It is noted that there are features of the prophet’s call that seem to be common to the call experience of other prophets such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, et al. In his commentary on Jeremiah, Brueggemann noted that “Those standard and predictable features include: divine initiative (v. 5), human resistance (v. 6), rebuke and reassurance (vv. 7-8), physical act of commissioning (v. 9a), and substance of commission (vv. 9b-10).”¹⁰ These predictable features are called constitutive elements by Norman Habel, who lists six: divine confrontation, introductory word, commission, objection, reassurance, and sign.¹¹ However, he is critiqued by Holladay, where he is cited, for his scheme being “too artificial for all the passages in question.”¹²

The matter of the call was to be noted as one not arising from a vision, but from the word of Yahweh, Himself. This may be compared with that of Amos (7:10-17), where Amos notes that “the Lord said to me” (v. 15). It may be contrasted with that of Isaiah (chapter 6), which appears to have been through a vision, though the

⁹John Bright, *Jeremiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 6-7.

¹⁰Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck up and to Tear Down*, 22-23. In the same text, Brueggemann exposes the three understandings of the call narrative that exist. It is the position of this author that the text reports the actual personal experience of Jeremiah, rather than a liturgical experience, or an editorial construction, as is presumed by some scholars.

¹¹Norman C. Habel, “The form and Significance of the Call Narratives,” *ZAW* 77 (1965): 297-323, cited in Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 1986, 27.

¹²*Ibid.*

text speaks of Yahweh conversing with him. Much clearer was that of Ezekiel (Eze. 1:1-2:8), who spoke of seeing visions of Yahweh (v. 1).

In v. 5a, there is a textual matter of the *qere* reading of אֶצְרָךְ, “formed you”, as against the *kethib* reading which is usually taken as אֶצְוֹרְךָ, which is identified with a by-form צוּר, “form, fashion”. Holladay sees a strong possibility of a “near miss” here, and argues that “one expects ‘form’ but hears ‘summon’.”¹³ However, there are enough possible translations and by-forms of the root צוּר, none of which suggests “summon,” to disregard Holladay’s suggestion, in favour of “form,” which is also accepted by the majority of scholars.¹⁴ Yahweh identifies Himself as the source of Jeremiah’s existence. In the same breath, He indicates that not only is Jeremiah’s origin divine, but his existence is purposeful; for, says God, “I knew you” (יָדַעְתִּיךָ). This is no mere coming to understand, or to experience a person, since it is Yahweh who has made this object of His knowing, or this creature that He knows. What this then speaks about is divine intention towards Jeremiah, or a singling out of the prophet, prior to the beginning of his earliest experience in this life.¹⁵ Yahweh continues His stress on Jeremiah’s

¹³William Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1966), 20.

¹⁴Ibid. See Holladay’s discussion on the matter. The lexicon entries for צוּר may be seen in Francis Brown, et al., *Hebrew-Aramaic and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), and Ludwig Koehler, et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, revised edition (Leiden: Brill NV, 1994-2000). [Database on CD], BibleWorks 7.0.

¹⁵C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Jeremiah-Lamentations*(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 34-35.

divine origin by noting that He not only formed the prophet in the womb of his mother, but He also brought him forth from the womb. Consistent with divine intention and a singling out of the prophet, Yahweh informed him, “I consecrated you” (הִקְדַּשְׁתִּיךָ). Yahweh wanted him to know that all the years of his life had been numbered. The dialogue that they were having was part of his destiny, for he had been singled out by divine intention. But there is a reason for singling out Jeremiah, and for that to be accomplished, he must know. “I have ordained you a prophet to the nations.” The base meanings for the root of נָתַתִּיךָ is “to give, or to set.” However, Yahweh was putting Jeremiah in a privileged position, to be His representative to the nations. Though Jeremiah’s service would be directed to humanity, he would not be accountable to humanity. On the contrary, he would be Yahweh’s ambassador, installed by Yahweh, and therefore accountable to Him. Consequently, “I have ordained” you is the most appropriate translation for נָתַתִּיךָ. The scope of Jeremiah’s ministry was to be the nations. When used in the plural, גּוֹי (nation or people) usually signifies foreign nations. Therefore, his message would be not only to Judah, but also to those nations who would be potential allies, as well as potential enemies of Judah.

In verse 6, Jeremiah objects to the divine call of Yahweh on his life. It would seem that by quick reflection, the awesomeness of the responsibility just articulated by Yahweh dawned upon him. He expresses dismay, “Alas, Lord, Yahweh...” (אָהָה אֲדָנָי יְהוִה) ¹⁶ instead of accepting it gladly. Jeremiah is simply afraid. ¹⁷

¹⁶“Alas, Lord, Yahweh” occurs ten times in the O.T., including Jer. 1:6, to signify alarm. David Beesley shares some useful reflections on אָהָה, in his article “The Language of Astonishment: Jeremiah’s Expressions of Shock and Surprise,” in *Eastern Journal of Practical*

In consideration of his frailty, he makes an objection on the basis of his lack of years and experience; “I do not know how to speak, because I am a young boy.” Though there is no certainty as to the age of Jeremiah at the time of this experience, it seems most appropriate that his contention was that he was too young for the awesome responsibility that Yahweh was now telling him was his. The word נָעַר covers a large range of meanings; it may refer to a male infant, such as baby Moses in the basket (Ex. 2:19), but it may also refer to the weapon-bearer of Jonathan (1Sam. 14:1),¹⁸ who was certainly no infant.

Yahweh’s response, in vv. 7-8, is to overrule the young Jeremiah. He rebukes him for speaking that way, asserts His sovereignty, and at the same time assures Jeremiah that he needs not be afraid. “Do not say that I am a young boy, because wherever (עַל-כֵּל-אֲשֶׁר) I shall send you, you shall go.” Jeremiah seems to have no say in the matter. “And all that I command you (אֲצַוֶּיךָ) you shall speak.”

Theology 10:1 (1996) : 7-17. The other passages include: Jos. 7:7; Jdg. 6:22; Jer. 4:10; 14:13; 32:17; Eze. 4:14; 9:8; 11:13; and 21:5.

¹⁷ The *Hebrew Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* reports that הָרָחַק is an interjection that represents a “cry in the face of fear,” which is consistent with all the occurrences that I have examined. Ludwig Koehler And Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, subsequently revised by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm with assistance from Benedikt Hartmann, Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, Philippe Reymond, translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson © 1994-2000 Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands. [CD ROM] BibleWorks 7.0.

¹⁸William Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 34.

Yahweh declares His sovereign power to send Jeremiah wherever His wills, and to command him to do whatever He wills. However, Yahweh is not to be charged with being a bully, because He never gives at task to any servant that He has not prepared that servant to accomplish. He declared His will and intention to be there for Jeremiah; “Do not be afraid of their faces, because I am with you to deliver you (v. 8).” This seems to be more than just an assurance of divine protection; it is also an indication of the challenges that the prophet would face in accomplishing his purpose. The countenance of many would be negative in relation to the message of Jeremiah, and consequently, he would find himself in situations where he would need to be delivered from opposition.¹⁹ However, he was to be confident that he would be delivered by Yahweh.

Having established the non-optional nature of Jeremiah’s responsibility, and the addressing of the prophet’s immediate and deep-seated fear, Yahweh returns to preparing the young Jeremiah for the task that was his to fulfill. He stretched out His hand and touched Jeremiah’s mouth and said, “See I have put my words in your mouth (v. 9b).” Essential to a successful fulfillment of Jeremiah’s purpose in life was his transmission of the word of Yahweh, which he needed to have. No longer was it tenable for Jeremiah to worry about what he would say, for he had now been given assurance that he had what to say. Indeed, Jeremiah was not here given knowledge in the sense that he now know all that God would say, but this symbolic act was indicative of divine approval.

¹⁹ Instances where Jeremiah’s life is threatened or attacked abound in the text. It is here that he would gain an understanding of Yahweh’s promises to him. But for now, the promise was to be sufficient. Such instances are revealed in the following passages: 11:18-19; 18:18-20; 20:1-2; 26:7-8; and 37:11-16.

Not to be ignored is the great privilege that Yahweh was extending to him in choosing Jeremiah as the vehicle to bring His message to Judah and the nations. “From then on Jeremiah's words would be truly God's, and he would actually become a mouthpiece for God (cf. Isa 6:7).”²⁰

Yahweh proceeds in v. 10 to indicate the scope and authority of Jeremiah's ministry. “Look, I set you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.” Six verbs are here used to indicate Jeremiah's authority, but noticeable is the fact that four of them are negative. No doubt this is no small task, for it encompasses not just cities, but nations. The reality being that among them would be nations who do not subscribe to the Lordship of Yahweh, and who would no doubt be hostile to His messenger. This would have been a reason for even greater concern than just that of the receptiveness of the Jews. The authority that accompanies the responsibility may be viewed as bitter sweet.

III. The Signs - 1:11-16

¹¹ *And the word of Yahweh came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I answered, “I see a branch of an almond tree”* ¹² *Yahweh said to me, “You did well, because I am watching over My word to fulfil it.”* ¹³ *And the word of Yahweh came to me a second time saying, “What do you see?” And I answered, “I see a boiling pot, and its face is facing away from the north.”* ¹⁴ *And Yahweh said to me,*

²⁰Charles L. Fienberg, *Jeremiah* [CD].

“Evil shall be opened upon all those who inhabit the land.”
¹⁵ *For behold I shall summon all the clans of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord. And their kings shall set their thrones at the entrance of Jerusalem, and against all its surrounding walls, and against all the cities of Judah.* ¹⁶ *And I shall declare my judgments against them whereby they deserted me, and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and have bowed down to the works of their hands.*

This section reports two visionary signs that support the claim of Yahweh in vv. 4-10, and in the same breath establishes a case against Jerusalem and Judah. The first of the two signs contains a play on words (paronomasia) that is lost in English translation but would have been significant for the force of the vision, to the Hebrew mind. The “almond tree” is *shāqer* שָׁקֵר; and God is “watching” *shāqar* שָׁקַר over his word to fulfill it. The second of the two signs indicates the direction and nature of the disaster that Yahweh intended to bring upon His people.

There has been much debate over the significance of שָׁקֵר and שָׁקַר in Jeremiah scholarship. “The opinion that the almond tree is called שָׁקֵר because it is ‘wakeful’ is found in DBD and KB² and is supported by G. Dalman’s observation that the tree is so called because it blossoms so early that it appears not to take the sleep of winter.”²¹ The almond tree is, as it were, the “waker” of trees, and is an indicator of the certainty of not only the coming of spring, but of all that comes with spring. The picture shows that the measure of Jerusalem’s iniquity fills very fast, and, as if their destruction slumbered too long, they waken it, they hasten it, and Yahweh will

²¹William McKane, *Jeremiah*, vol. 1 I-XXV, 15.

hasten to perform what He has spoken against them.²² This message is similar to that received by Jeremiah's contemporary, Ezekiel: "I will not look on you with pity or spare you; I will repay you in accordance with your conduct and the detestable practices among you. Then you will know that it is I the LORD who strikes the blow. The day is here! It has come! Doom has burst forth, the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed" (Eze. 7:9-10 NIV)! Judgment was indeed inevitable for the people of Jerusalem, for the word of Yahweh is certain.

The second sign that Jeremiah is given is that of a boiling pot נְפוֹרֶה סִיר. This is indicative of a noun adjective construction, and is quite consistent with its Greek LXX translation, λέβητα ὑποκαλόμενον, that is, "a pot, a boiling one." The word *sir* סִיר by itself has been used for a cooking-pot in Exodus 16:3; 2 Kings 4:38-41; Ezekiel 24:3, and Micah 3:3, as well as a basin in which to wash the feet, in Psalms 60:10 and 108:10. It is therefore not necessary, given the context, to use it with another word for it to be understood as a cooking-pot. Therefore, it is indicative that the employment of this particular noun adjective construction is not to identify the type of pot as much as it is a focus on what is happening in pot. The wrath of Yahweh is boiling in a pot that is facing away from the North, which is the same as saying that His wrath will be poured out on those in the South.

In verses 14-16, Yahweh establishes the method and cause of judgment as He explains the signs. He declares that from the north,

²²Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary : On the Whole Bible*, electronic ed. of the complete and unabridged edition (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991), Jer. 1:11.

evil (הַרְעָה) shall be opened upon all the inhabitants of the land. The evil to which He here refers is Babylon in Mesopotamia. Though Babylon is located east of Judah, her armies – and all invading armies from Mesopotamia – would invade Palestine from the north because of the impassable Arabian desert. He promises to summon (קָרָא) all the clans of the kingdoms of the north. Here Yahweh takes full responsibility for Judah's future demise. It must be clear that it will not be by coincidence or simply the might of the kingdoms of the north, but by Yahweh's decree. The matter of the cause of the impending judgment is no less punctuated, for Yahweh reiterates that for which His people are guilty and will be thereby punished. They have deserted Yahweh, and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and have bowed down to the works of their hands.

IV. The Assurance 1:17-19

¹⁷ Now, gird up your loins and stand up, and tell them all that I command you to. Do not break down because of their faces, lest I break you down before them. ¹⁸ And as for me, behold I have made you this day as a fortified city, as a pillar of iron, and as a wall of bronze against the whole land; to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests, and to the people of the land. ¹⁹ And they shall wage war against you but not succeed against you for I am with you, declares Yahweh, to deliver you.

In this last section of the first chapter of Jeremiah, we find God's assurance to the prophet in relation to his appointment. It consists of a reiteration of purpose, prohibition against fear, and details of assurance. Jeremiah is here given strong encouragement for the task, because his message would not be popular or welcome, and

nothing short of unwavering commitment to Yahweh was needed to ensure success in God's purpose for his life.

The opening pronoun of v. 17, **וְאַתָּה**, is significant, for having completed His comments relative to what shall befall Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, Yahweh turns His attention to Jeremiah, and the role he has to play in what is to come. It has been translated "for your part", "as for you", "but as for you", and "But you."²³ The context, however, bears no hint of hostility from God towards Jeremiah, as the last three translations might connote, but rather that of an encouraging preparation for the challenging task that lay ahead. To translate this emphasis into English, I think "Now" is sufficient. Its significance is punctuated by the fact that the verb it precedes ("gird" **תִּחַזֵּק**) already is in the second person singular. The force of such a construction seems to be that Yahweh, having just indicated what He intends to do in light of Judah's backsliding, begins to tell Jeremiah just what his role is to be in the divine plan.

Yahweh tells Jeremiah to gird up his loins and stand up. The girding of the loins denotes tying a belt or the like around one's waist so as to confine the tunic or other long garment, or to tuck up the extremities of one's tunic into the belt, so as to free the legs for running, physical work, doing battle, or the like.²⁴ Metaphorically, Jeremiah was to be prepared for whatever he had to do to accomplish God's purpose. He was to approach his vocation as a soldier would approach a battle; being alert and ready for

²³Holladay, 43; Thompson, 155, and *The New Jerusalem Bible*, 1985; Craigie, Kelly, and Drinkard, 14; and *The Complete Jewish Bible*, 8, respectively.

²⁴Holladay, 43.

appropriate action. Jeremiah certainly needed to have this mentality, because the lot of speaking to the nations on this matter was his. Yahweh reiterates the divine imperative of Jeremiah's purpose as stated in v. 7, when He instructs Jeremiah "and tell them all that I command you to" (v. 17).

Knowing in advance the road that Jeremiah was to travel as a result of this divine appointment, Yahweh prepares him by prohibiting fear on his part. "Do not break down (אֶל-תִּהְיֶה) because of their faces..." This is a synonym of "Do not be afraid" (אֶל-תִּירָא, v. 8), which is often found in parallelism in the Old Testament. The verb "break down," הִחַת, in this occurrence is a *niphal*, but it is almost immediately followed, in reference to Yahweh, by an *hiphil* counterpart. "Though the verb functions as a synonym of 'be afraid,' the traditional translation 'be dismayed' (RSV, JB) is too weak; the *hiphil* verb is used of physical shattering in Isa. 9:3, and it appears to be used of psychological paralysis, or inability to function at all..."²⁵ So indeed, Yahweh is saying to His servant, "Do not break down, or be paralyzed because of their intimidation." However, Yahweh's people can never forget that His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts, for He follows up this assurance with a threat that He Himself will break Jeremiah down in the presence of the people if he fails to walk in his divine appointment.

Having addressed his intentions towards the inhabitants of the land, and then to Jeremiah's role in what He intended to do, Yahweh now addresses His role in the mission of Jeremiah. He begins v. 18 in a similar way as v. 17; "And as for me" (וְאֲנִי). He proceeds hereon to

²⁵Ibid. 44.

give details of His assurance to Jeremiah. He reiterates His sovereignty over Jeremiah's destiny by using the same word which He used in v. 5; "I have made you" (יָצַרְתִּיךָ). It is here rendered differently from v. 5 (I have set you) because of the figure of speech which follows in this particular context. However, the import is the same, as both indicate that it is Yahweh who establishes by His sovereign will. Yahweh employs the use of similes to inform Jeremiah that he has been given the ability to accomplish his task. A fortified city is one that is secure in times of war, though it may be confronted with great opposition. Those within its walls will usually have a strong sense of security because its description is in its ability to protect those within its walls. The iron pillar and bronze walls would be structures that could be contained within the fortified city. However, by themselves they signify that which is capable of withstanding great forces against them.

What is significant is that Yahweh presents the reality of Jeremiah's mission, in that the ability which is now his puts him in direct opposition to "the whole land." He was to have no surprises, as from the outset it is made clear that his mission will be opposed. His mission is to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests, and to the people of the land. "And they shall wage war against you, but will not overcome you" (v. 19a). Those with authority would not sit idly by while the prophet utters words that would bring discomfort to the people that they lead. It was also a reminder that the message was one that was harsh and had to be delivered. However, Yahweh follows with the most significant detail of His assurance to Jeremiah. The basis on which Jeremiah will not be overcome is, "for I am with you." The Jewish authors of the Septuagint well understood the significance of this statement, I believe, as they felt constrained to translate this phrase using the ἐγὼ εἰμι construction that the New Testament writers employed for

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SUMMARY

Yahweh revealed His intentions for Jeremiah as deliberate and pre-temporal. In response to Jeremiah's fearful objections, Yahweh assured him concerning his capacity to carry His message through the divine imperative for Jeremiah to be the one for this time and purpose, through the symbolic transmission of Yahweh's word.

²⁶ For the application of this hermeneutic in a Majority-world setting, see John Keane, *iPromise: Inspiration from Jamaica's National Pledge* (Kingston: PearTree, 2012), and D.V. Palmer, "I-n-I in the NT and the Hermeneutics of Caribbean Theology," *Groundings: Catholic Theological Reflections on Issues Facing Caribbean People in the 21st Century* 29 (January 2013): 37-59.