



SUNDAY SCHOOL FEBRUARY 2, 2025

Prayer:

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OLD TESTAMENT

Jeremiah 1:4-10

A PROPHET TO THE NATIONS

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, "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."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy."

But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD."

Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

OVERVIEW

Jeremiah 1:4-10 is the account of the prophet Jeremiah's call by God. In this passage, God appoints Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations before his birth, demonstrating divine foreknowledge and purpose. Jeremiah initially expresses reluctance due to his youth, but God assures him of His presence and equips him for the task. The passage emphasizes themes of divine calling, purpose, and empowerment for service.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Placement in Scripture:** This passage opens the Book of Jeremiah, introducing its primary themes: judgment, repentance, and restoration. Jeremiah's call sets the tone for his challenging prophetic mission.
- **Themes:** The passage highlights God's sovereignty, Jeremiah's role as a prophet, and the universal scope of his ministry ("to the nations").
- **Language and Imagery:** God's words of commissioning are personal and powerful. The touch of Jeremiah's mouth symbolizes God's direct empowerment for his prophetic mission.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Historical Background:** Jeremiah's ministry began during the reign of **King Josiah** (640–609 BCE), a period of reform and the eventual fall of Judah to Babylon. Jeremiah lived through the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

See Addendum on King Josiah and other Kings.

- **Cultural Setting:** Prophets often faced hostility in ancient Israel, particularly when their messages challenged political or religious authorities. Jeremiah's task was especially difficult as he prophesied during a time of national crisis.
- **Religious Context:** The polytheistic practices of surrounding nations and internal corruption within Judah posed challenges to Jeremiah's call to faithfulness to Yahweh.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Date of Jeremiah's Call:** Likely around 627 BCE, during King Josiah's reforms.



- **Broader Context:** The late 7th and early 6th centuries BCE were tumultuous for Judah, culminating in Babylon's dominance and the exile of the Jewish people.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL & MODERN-DAY INTERPRETATION

Metaphorical Interpretation:

- **Divine Foreknowledge:** Jeremiah's call before birth reflects the idea of God having a purpose for each individual, emphasizing that identity and vocation are rooted in divine intention.
- **Youth and Inadequacy:** Jeremiah's reluctance due to his youth resonates with human fears of inadequacy in the face of great tasks. The assurance of God's presence reminds readers that divine missions come with divine empowerment.
- **Prophetic Role:** Jeremiah's call "to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" reflects the dual nature of prophetic ministry: dismantling injustice and establishing righteousness.

Modern Application:

- **Calling and Vocation:** Many people today grapple with questions of purpose. Jeremiah's story encourages reflection on how personal vocations align with larger divine purposes.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Jeremiah's narrative speaks to young people, emphasizing that age does not limit the ability to make a meaningful impact.
- **Social Justice:** The call to challenge injustice remains relevant, inspiring individuals and communities to confront systemic wrongs and work toward restoration.

SUMMARY

Jeremiah 1:4-10 narrates the prophet's divine calling, emphasizing God's foreknowledge and purpose. Despite Jeremiah's initial reluctance, God assures him of His presence and equips him to speak with authority to nations. The passage highlights themes of divine sovereignty, human vulnerability, and the transformative power of God's calling. It invites readers to consider their own vocations and challenges them to trust in God's empowerment to address personal and societal challenges.

See the separate document on Prophets.



NEW TESTAMENT (GOSPEL)

Luke 4:21-24, 28-30

THE PROPHET JESUS NOT ACCEPTED

Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

They said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'"

And he said, "Truly I tell you; no prophet is accepted in his hometown."

When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage.

They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

OVERVIEW

In this passage, Jesus is speaking in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, following the reading of Isaiah 61:1-2, where He proclaimed its fulfillment. His audience reacts initially with amazement but soon grows hostile as Jesus challenges their assumptions about exclusivity in God's blessings. By referencing non-Israelite recipients of God's miracles during Elijah and Elisha's ministries, Jesus highlights the inclusive nature of God's work. The crowd's anger culminates in an attempt to drive Him out and harm Him, but Jesus walks away unharmed.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Preceding Verses:** In Luke 4:14-20, Jesus reads from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue and declares that He fulfills this prophecy. The passage focuses on liberation, healing, and the year of the Lord's favor, a vision of God's restorative justice.
- **Key Themes:**
 - **Fulfillment of Prophecy:** Jesus emphasizes that the messianic age has arrived.
 - **Rejection of Prophets:** The people of Nazareth struggle to reconcile their familiarity with Jesus ("Joseph's son") with His bold claims.
 - **Universal Salvation:** Jesus points to God's work extending beyond Israel, a provocative statement to His audience.
- **The Broader Gospel Narrative:** This episode marks the beginning of Jesus's public ministry in Luke, highlighting themes of resistance and rejection that will recur.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **First-Century Nazareth:** A small, insular village in Galilee where social identity was tightly knit and expectations about community loyalty were strong. Nazareth's residents likely felt a sense of pride and ownership over one of their own.
- **Jewish Expectations of the Messiah:** Many Jews anticipated a political Messiah who would restore Israel's sovereignty and bring blessings exclusively to God's chosen people. Jesus's message of inclusivity disrupted these expectations.



- **Cultural Norms:** Prophets were often rejected in their own communities due to familiarity and skepticism (a common proverb is reflected in v. 24: "No prophet is accepted in his hometown"). Elijah and Elisha's ministry to Gentiles would have been controversial examples, stirring resentment among those who viewed God's blessings as Israel's unique privilege.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Biblical Timeline:** This event occurs early in Jesus's ministry, shortly after His baptism (Luke 3:21-22) and His wilderness testing (Luke 4:1-13). It is one of His first recorded public teachings.
- **Roman Occupation:** The region was under Roman control, and the Jews were living with expectations of deliverance from political oppression. The tension between Jewish communities and Roman authorities often heightened messianic hopes.
- **First-Century Synagogue Worship:** Synagogues served as centers of community worship, study, and teaching. A visiting teacher or rabbi was often invited to read and interpret Scripture, which explains Jesus's role here.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL & MODERN-DAY INTERPRETATION

Metaphorical Interpretation:

- The **hometown rejection** represents the broader rejection of Jesus as the Messiah by those who expected Him to conform to their expectations.
- Jesus's reference to Elijah and Elisha serving Gentiles symbolizes the **universal nature of God's kingdom**, challenging exclusivity and ethnocentrism.
- The crowd's violent reaction reflects human resistance to radical truth and inclusion, a common struggle against change that disrupts comfort zones.

Modern-Day Context:

- **Inclusion and Diversity:** The passage challenges modern faith communities to embrace those outside their immediate circles, reflecting God's care for all people, regardless of nationality, race, or background.
- **Prophetic Voices:** This passage reminds us that prophetic truths often face rejection, especially when they challenge established norms or demand a shift in perspective.
- **Faith vs. Familiarity:** Like the people of Nazareth, modern believers may struggle to accept profound truths from familiar sources, underscoring the need for humility.

SUMMARY

In Luke 4:21-24, 28-30, Jesus declares Himself the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, initially impressing His audience in Nazareth. However, their amazement turns to outrage when He highlights God's work among Gentiles during Elijah and Elisha's time. **His message challenges their exclusive view of salvation and sparks their anger.** The crowd attempts to harm Him, but Jesus escapes unharmed. This passage introduces themes of rejection, the inclusivity of God's mission, and the resistance to prophetic truth—core aspects of Jesus's ministry and the Gospel message.

See Addendum on Jesus Escaping Unharmed and Not Accepted in Hometown.



ADDENDUM

King Josiah

King **Josiah** was one of the most righteous kings of Judah, known for his religious reforms and efforts to restore the worship of Yahweh. His reign (640–609 BCE) came at a time when Judah was steeped in idolatry. Josiah implemented major religious reforms after discovering the **Book of the Law** (likely part of Deuteronomy) in the Temple. His story is recorded in **2 Kings 22–23** and **2 Chronicles 34–35**.

Biblical Context

- Josiah became king at only **eight years old** after his father, **Amon**, was assassinated.
- At **16 years old**, he began seeking the God of his ancestor David.
- At **20 years old**, he launched religious reforms, destroying pagan altars and idols throughout Judah.
- At **26 years old**, during Temple repairs, the **Book of the Law** was discovered. Shocked by how far Judah had strayed, Josiah instituted nationwide reforms.
- He reinstituted the Passover and centralized worship in **Jerusalem**.

Historical Context

- Josiah reigned during the decline of the **Assyrian Empire**, which had previously dominated Judah.
- **Babylon** was rising in power, and **Egypt** was also a key player in the region.
- The **religious corruption** in Judah was at its peak, as previous kings had allowed **Baal worship**, child sacrifice, and pagan influences.

Key Events in His Reign

1. **Temple Restoration & Finding the Law (2 Kings 22)**
 - a. Josiah ordered repairs to the Temple.
 - b. **Hilkiah the high priest** found the **Book of the Law**, likely an early form of **Deuteronomy**.
 - c. After hearing it read, Josiah tore his clothes in mourning, realizing Judah had broken God's covenant.
2. **Religious Reforms (2 Kings 23)**
 - a. Josiah **destroyed pagan altars, removed idolatrous priests, and tore down high places**.
 - b. He **abolished child sacrifice** and removed all traces of **Baal, Asherah, and Molech worship**.
 - c. He **celebrated Passover** as no king had done since the days of the judges.
3. **Death in Battle (2 Kings 23:28-30)**
 - a. Josiah attempted to block **Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt** from aiding **Assyria** in battle.
 - b. He was **killed at Megiddo** in 609 BCE.
 - c. His death marked the **beginning of Judah's decline**, leading to its destruction by **Babylon** in 586 BCE.



Legacy & Significance

- **Last Great King of Judah:** After Josiah, Judah had a series of weak kings, leading to exile.
- **A Model of Faithfulness:** Josiah is **praised** in **2 Kings 23:25**, which states:
 - *"Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength..."*
- **Messianic Expectation:** Some later Jewish traditions saw Josiah as a **foreshadowing of the Messiah** due to his zeal for God's law.
- **Connection to Jeremiah:** **Jeremiah** began his prophetic ministry during Josiah's reign (Jeremiah 1:2), supporting his reforms.

Modern Lessons from Josiah

- **Seeking God Early:** Josiah started following God in his youth, showing that age does not limit spiritual leadership.
- **Repentance & Action:** When he learned the truth, Josiah acted decisively, reminding believers that true repentance involves change.
- **Spiritual Reform:** His story challenges individuals and communities to **remove modern "idols"** and return to true faith.

The Books of **1 & 2 Kings** (as well as 1 & 2 Chronicles) evaluate each king of **Israel** and **Judah** based on their faithfulness to God. Most kings, particularly in the **Northern Kingdom (Israel)**, were considered **evil**, while only a few in the **Southern Kingdom (Judah)** were deemed **righteous**.

Kings of the United Monarchy (Before the Split)

Before Israel split into two kingdoms (Israel & Judah), there were **three** kings:

1. **Saul** ❌ (*Unfaithful – Rejected by God*): Started well but turned against God's commands. Consulted a medium and lost favor with God.
2. **David** ✅❌ (*Faithful – "Man After God's Own Heart"*): Committed **sins (Bathsheba, Uriah)** but repented sincerely. He also had a dysfunctional family. But, he established **Jerusalem** as the center of worship and was considered "just and wise."
3. **Solomon** ⚠️ (*Mixed – Wise but Turned to Idolatry*): Built the **Temple** but later **worshipped foreign gods**. His idolatry led to the kingdom splitting after his death.

Kings of the Divided Kingdom (After the Split in 931 BCE)

A. Kings of Israel (Northern Kingdom) – ALL BAD

Every king of Israel was considered evil because they promoted idolatry and led the people away from God. The Northern Kingdom fell in **722 BCE** to Assyria.

King	Verdict	Notable Actions
Jeroboam I	❌ Evil	Established golden calves for worship (1 Kings 12:26-33).
Nadab	❌ Evil	Continued Jeroboam's idolatry.



King	Verdict	Notable Actions
Baasha	✗ Evil	Killed Jeroboam's family.
Elah	✗ Evil	Assassinated while drunk.
Zimri	✗ Evil	Ruled only 7 days , burned palace down.
Omri	✗ Evil	Built Samaria , strengthened Israel, but promoted Baal worship .
Ahab	✗✗ Very Evil	Married Jezebel , persecuted Elijah , promoted Baal worship (1 Kings 16:30).
Ahaziah	✗ Evil	Followed Ahab's ways, consulted Baal-Zebub (2 Kings 1:2).
Jehoram (Joram)	✗ Evil	Opposed Elisha the prophet.
Jehu	⚠ Mixed	Killed Ahab's family & destroyed Baal worship but still sinned (2 Kings 10:28-31).
Jehoahaz	✗ Evil	Continued idolatry.
Jehoash (Joash)	✗ Evil	Fought against Judah's king, led Israel in wickedness.
Jeroboam II	✗ Evil	Expanded Israel's territory but promoted idolatry .
Zechariah	✗ Evil	Assassinated after 6 months.
Shallum	✗ Evil	Ruled for 1 month , assassinated.
Menahem	✗ Evil	Brutally ruled, taxed people for Assyria.
Pekahiah	✗ Evil	Assassinated after 2 years.
Pekah	✗ Evil	Opposed Judah , assassinated.
Hoshea	✗ Evil	Last king of Israel, defeated by Assyria in 722 BCE .

Final Verdict: All 19 kings of Israel were evil. The kingdom was destroyed by **Assyria** due to sin.

Kings of Judah (Southern Kingdom) – Mostly Bad, Some Righteous

Judah had **20 kings**, with **8 righteous ones**. The kingdom lasted until **586 BCE**, when Babylon conquered it.

King	Verdict	Notable Actions
Rehoboam	✗ Evil	Son of Solomon, caused the kingdom to split .
Abijah	✗ Evil	Warred with Israel, did not fully follow God.
Asa	✓ Righteous	Removed idols, sought God, but later relied on human alliances (1 Kings 15:11-14).
Jehoshaphat	✓ Righteous	Trusted God in battle, but allied with Ahab (2 Chronicles 17:3-6).



King	Verdict	Notable Actions
Jehoram	✗ Evil	Married Ahab's daughter , killed brothers, led Judah into sin.
Ahaziah	✗ Evil	Followed Ahab's wicked ways, assassinated.
Queen Athaliah	✗ Evil	Only queen to rule Judah, killed royal family, promoted Baal worship.
Joash (Jehoash)	✓ Righteous (Early), ✗ Evil (Later)	Repaired the Temple , but later abandoned God .
Amaziah	✓ Righteous (Mostly)	Obedied God early but became prideful.
Uzziah (Azariah)	✓ Righteous	Ruled 52 years , sought God, but got leprosy for entering the Temple as a priest.
Jotham	✓ Righteous	Did right in God's eyes but didn't remove high places.
Ahaz	✗ Evil	Sacrificed his sons to idols (2 Kings 16:3).
Hezekiah	✓ Righteous	Trusted God against Assyria, destroyed idols, restored worship (2 Kings 18:5-7).
Manasseh	✗✗ Very Evil (But Repented)	Most wicked king (idolatry, child sacrifice), but later repented (2 Chronicles 33:12-13).
Amon	✗ Evil	Continued Manasseh's sins but did not repent .
Josiah	✓✓ Very Righteous	Restored the Law , destroyed idols, celebrated Passover (2 Kings 23:25).
Jehoahaz	✗ Evil	Ruled 3 months , deposed by Pharaoh.
Jehoiakim	✗ Evil	Burned Jeremiah's scroll, ignored God's warnings .
Jehoiachin	✗ Evil	Surrendered to Babylon, taken captive.
Zedekiah	✗ Evil	Last king of Judah, rebelled, Jerusalem was destroyed (2 Kings 25).

Final Verdict:

- **8 righteous kings** (some partially faithful).
- **12 evil kings + 1 evil queen**.
- Judah fell to **Babylon in 586 BCE** because of continued sin.

Final Summary

Kingdom	Good Kings	Bad Kings	Outcome
Israel (North)	0	19	Conquered by Assyria (722 BCE)
Judah (South)	8	12 + 1 Queen	Conquered by Babylon (586 BCE)

Key Takeaways

1. **Israel (Northern Kingdom) was entirely wicked** – all 19 kings led the people astray.



2. **Judah (Southern Kingdom) had 8 righteous kings** – but the bad kings eventually led to its downfall.
3. **The kingdom's fate depended on obedience to God** – both Israel and Judah were judged for their idolatry.
4. **Even good kings had flaws** – but God honored those who sought Him.

How Did Jesus Escape?

Luke 4:30 states, **“But he passed through the midst of them and went away.”** This simple statement raises an interesting question: *How did Jesus escape unharmed from an angry mob intent on killing Him?*

Possible Explanations:

1. **Divine Protection (Supernatural Explanation):** Some scholars and believers argue that Jesus was divinely protected, meaning the crowd was mysteriously restrained, confused, or blinded, allowing Him to walk away unscathed. Similar supernatural escapes occur in Scripture (e.g., John 8:59, where Jesus eludes an attempt to stone Him, and John 10:39, where He "escaped from their hands"). This interpretation aligns with the idea that Jesus's mission was under divine timing—His death would not happen until the appointed time.
2. **Authority and Presence (Psychological/Social Explanation):** Jesus may have carried Himself with such confidence and authority that the crowd hesitated to act decisively. As a respected teacher (even if they were angry at Him), the people may have been caught in their own indecision, allowing Him to slip away before they could act violently.
3. **Disorganization in the Mob (Crowd Dynamics Explanation):** Mobs often act irrationally, and their emotions can shift quickly. The outrage may have been loud but disorganized, leading to enough hesitation for Jesus to move through them unnoticed. The attempt to push Him off the cliff suggests their anger had reached a boiling point, but once the initial momentum was lost, the mob may have lost their nerve.
4. **Jesus Knew the Area Well (Geographical Explanation):** Nazareth was Jesus's hometown, meaning He likely knew the terrain better than His would-be attackers. He may have found a familiar path to evade them.

Theological Significance

- The escape highlights that Jesus's mission was not to be ended by an angry mob in Nazareth but rather to fulfill God's redemptive plan at the cross.
- His ability to walk away emphasizes **His control over His destiny**, not subject to human whims.
- The passage reinforces the biblical theme that **a prophet is not accepted in His hometown**, yet Jesus continues undeterred.

Not Accepted in Hometown Context

Jesus states in **Luke 4:24**, *“Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown,”* without explicitly referencing a specific Old Testament passage. Unlike when He reads from Isaiah 61 earlier in the passage (Luke 4:16-21), here, **He doesn't quote a prior source, He simply declares it as a truth.**

1. Is Jesus Quoting a Previous Text?



- **No direct Old Testament citation** is given, but His statement reflects a well-established biblical pattern of prophets being rejected by their own people.
- While this might sound like a **proverbial saying**, Jesus is not explicitly citing a recognized proverb or scripture, He is making a **prophetic declaration based on historical precedent**.

2. Where Would This Idea Come From?

Even though Jesus does not quote a specific passage, the concept is deeply rooted in **Jewish history and scriptures**. Here are a few key **Old Testament** examples where prophets were rejected:

- **Moses (Exodus 2:14)** – Rejected by his fellow Israelites before his mission fully began.
- **Elijah (1 Kings 18-19)** – Rejected by Israel, forced to flee from Jezebel.
- **Elisha (2 Kings 5:8-14)** – Initially rejected by Naaman because his healing instructions were too simple.
- **Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8-10)** – Given a mission knowing the people would reject him.
- **Jeremiah (Jeremiah 11:21, 12:6, 20:1-2)** – Rejected by his hometown (Anathoth) and his own family.
- **Amos (Amos 7:10-13)** – Told by a priest to leave and stop prophesying.

Each of these prophets faced **rejection by their own people**, which Jesus uses to frame His own experience.

3. Is Jesus Speaking a Common Proverb?

- Some scholars suggest that Jesus's phrase may have been a **common Jewish proverb** or an idea well known in oral tradition.
- However, there is no documented rabbinic proverb that exactly matches Jesus's wording.
- He is **not quoting a text, but rather formulating a universal truth** – prophets tend to be rejected by those most familiar with them.

4. Why Does Jesus Not Cite a Source?

- Unlike His reading from Isaiah 61, where He explicitly quotes Scripture, here Jesus **asserts this as self-evident truth**.
- His audience would likely have understood the pattern of rejected prophets without needing a direct citation.
- By stating it without a source, He **claims this truth as His own prophetic statement**, not just an academic reference to past writings.

5. The Deeper Meaning: Jesus as Ultimate Prophet

- Jesus is not just referring to past prophets—He is placing Himself in **that same prophetic tradition**.
- His rejection in Nazareth foreshadows His rejection by Israel as a whole and ultimately **His crucifixion**.