

# Jeremiah 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

## Analysis

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This verse contains one of Scripture's most profound statements about divine sovereignty and human identity: 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee.' The Hebrew verb 'knew' (yada, יָדָע) carries covenantal intimacy—not mere intellectual awareness but personal, relational knowledge implying choice and commitment. God's knowledge of Jeremiah preceded his biological conception, establishing that human identity and purpose originate in God's eternal plan, not random chance or merely parental decision. The verb 'formed' (yatsar, יָצַר) is the potter's word, used in Genesis 2:7 for God forming Adam—emphasizing deliberate creative artistry. God didn't just permit Jeremiah's existence but actively fashioned him for specific purpose. 'Sanctified' (qadash, קָדַשׁ) means set apart, consecrated, made holy—dedicated for sacred use before birth. The phrase 'I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations' reveals that Jeremiah's prophetic identity wasn't acquired through training but appointed by divine decree. This profound theology of divine sovereignty over human life, calling, and purpose anticipates Paul's similar testimony in Galatians 1:15.

## Historical Context

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This verse's teaching on God's prenatal knowledge and calling has enormous implications for understanding human dignity, divine purpose, and personal identity. Ancient Near Eastern cultures often viewed children as property or

economic assets; this text declares they are known by God with purpose before birth. The concept that God ordains individuals for specific callings before their birth appears elsewhere—Isaac (Genesis 17:19), Samson (Judges 13:5), John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), and Paul (Galatians 1:15). Jeremiah's specific calling as 'prophet unto the nations' is striking because he primarily ministered to Judah. Yet his prophecies concerning Babylon, Egypt, Moab, Ammon, and other nations (Jeremiah 46-51) fulfilled this mandate. His message influenced exiles in Babylon who would eventually return to rebuild. Early church fathers used this verse to affirm God's foreknowledge and sovereignty in salvation (Romans 8:29-30, Ephesians 1:4-5).

## **Related Passages**

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## **Study Questions**

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1. How does God's knowledge and calling of Jeremiah before birth shape our understanding of human personhood, purpose, and dignity?
2. In what ways does recognizing that God has ordained specific callings for individuals affect how we discern our own life direction and vocation?

## Interlinear Text

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וּבֶטֶרָם	אֶצְוֹרְךָ	בְּבֶטֶן	יָדַעַתִּיךָ	וּבֶטֶרָם
Before	I formed	thee in the belly	I knew	Before
H2962	H3335	H990	H3045	H2962
	תָּצֵא	מִן־הָאֵם	הִקְדַּשְׁתִּיךָ	נָבִיא
	thee and before thou camest forth	out of the womb	I sanctified	thee a prophet
	H3318	H7358	H6942	H5030
לְגוֹיִם	נִתְּתִיכָהּ:			
unto the nations	thee and I ordained			
H1471	H5414			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 139:16** (Parallel theme): Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

**Isaiah 49:1** (Parallel theme): Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

**Romans 8:29** (Parallel theme): For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

**Isaiah 49:5** (Parallel theme): And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

**Isaiah 44:2** (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

**Luke 1:41** (Holy): And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

**Luke 1:76** (Prophecy): And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

**Exodus 33:17** (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

**Jeremiah 1:10** (Parallel theme): See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

**Exodus 33:12** (Parallel theme): And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.