

The Book of Jeremiah

I. THE RULERS UNDER WHOM JEREMIAH MINISTERED.

- A. Josiah. Jeremiah was called by God during the reign of Josiah, Judah's last good king (640-609) 31 years.
- B. Jehoiakim. This wicked king burned Jeremiah's original written prophecy scroll (609-597) 11 years.
- C. Jehoiachin. This ninety-day wonder is soundly condemned by Jeremiah (597) 3 months.
- D. Zedekiah. The prophet suffered much under the reign of Zedekiah, Judah's final king (597-586) 11 years.
- E. Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah is treated with respect by the great Babylonian conqueror.
- F. Gedaliah. He was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar to govern the fallen city of Jerusalem.
- G. Johanan. He took over after the tragic assassination of Gedaliah and later forced Jeremiah to accompany a Jewish remnant to Egypt.

II. THE THREEFOLD MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH.

- A. He warned the majority still in Judah about the coming Babylonian captivity (25:1-14).
- B. He comforted the minority already captive in Babylon (ch. 29). Jeremiah wrote a letter of encouragement to the Jewish exiles in Babylon (29:1-32).
 - 1. They were to settle down for a long seventy-year stay (29:5-6, 10).
 - 2. They were to pray for the peace and prosperity of Babylon, that their own lives might be peaceful (29:7).
 - 3. They were to ignore the lies of these false prophets and mediums in Babylon, lest they be punished along with them (29:8-9).
 - 4. Jeremiah pronounced God's death sentence upon two of these prophets named Ahab and Zedekiah for their lying messages and their sin of adultery (29:20-23).
 - 5. He also warned the exiles concerning a man named Shemaiah, who was sending poison pen letters from Babylon to the influential leaders in Jerusalem against Jeremiah (29:24-32).
 - 6. God still loved them and would someday bring them back to Jerusalem (29:14).
- C. He pronounced judgment upon nine Gentile nations (46-51). Jeremiah dealt with each one in a specific way:
 - 1. Egypt (46:1-27).
 - a. Egypt would be defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at the Battle of Carchemish (46:2).
 - b. Their armies would flee in terror and fill the Euphrates with corpses (46:5-6).
 - c. Their sin wound (like Judah's) was incurable (46:11).
 - d. Pharaoh Hophra, the Egyptian leader, is ridiculed as a man of plenty of noise, but no power (46:17).
 - e. Egypt would be occupied by Nebuchadnezzar (46:26).
 - 2. Philistia (47:1-6).
 - a. It was to be overrun by the Egyptians. This occurred in 606 B.C., the year King Josiah died (47:1).
 - b. Strong Philistine men would scream and fathers would flee, leaving behind their helpless children (47:2-3).
 - c. Philistia's allies, Tyre and Sidon, would be destroyed at the same time (47:4).
 - d. The two chief Philistine cities of Gaza and Ashkelon would be totally destroyed (47:5).
 - 3. Moab (48:1-47).
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar's armies would overrun Moab (48:1-2).
 - b. Their god Chemosh was to be carried away with priests and princes (48:7).
 - c. Prior to this time, Moab had been relatively undisturbed from various invasions (46:11).
 - d. In the end, Moab will be as ashamed of her national idol god Chemosh as Israel was of her calf-god at Bethel (48:13).
 - e. The ancestor of the Moabites (Moab) was born in a cave (Gen. 19:37). During the fearful Babylonian invasion, the Moabites will once again flee into caves (48:28).
 - 4. Ammon (49:1-6).
 - a. This nation would be punished for occupying the cities of Israel after the captivity and worshipping the false god Milcom (49:1).
 - b. Milcom, along with the Ammonite princes and priests, would be carried away (49:3).
 - c. Ammon will be reestablished during the millennium (49:6).
 - 5. Edom (49:7-22).
 - a. Edom's cities would become as silent as Sodom and Gomorrah (49:18).
 - b. Their cry will be heard as far away as the Red Sea (49:21).
 - c. God will, however, be merciful to her widows and orphans (49:11).
 - 6. Damascus (49:23-27).
 - a. Her entire army would be destroyed in a single day (49:26).
 - b. A fire would start at the edge of the city and eventually burn up the palaces of Benhadad (49:27).
 - 7. Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33).

- a. Kedar was the name of an Arab tribe living in the desert east of Palestine which was to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (49:28).
- b. God himself ordered Nebuchadnezzar to destroy these wealthy, materialistic and arrogant Bedouin tribes (49:30-32).
- c. Hazor, another Arabian tribe located nearby, was to be leveled also, never again to be rebuilt (49:33).
8. Elam (49:34-39).
 - a. Elam was east of the Tigris-Euphrates country, with its capital at Susa and overrun by Nebuchadnezzar in the winter of 596 B.C. Zedekiah, Judah's last king, began ruling in Jerusalem at that time (49:34-37).
 - b. Elam is to be reestablished during the millennium (49:38-39).
9. Babylon (50:1--51:64).
 - a. Two Babylons seem to be referred to in these verses. One is the historical Babylon, captured by Darius the Persian in October of 539 B.C. (Dan. 5) and the other is future Babylon, which will be destroyed by God himself (Rev. 18).
 - b. After the destruction of both Babylons, Israel would seek their God. This happened historically (Ezra 1) and it will occur in the future.
 - c. After the final destruction of Babylon (Rev. 18) the city will never be inhabited again (51:25-26).
 - d. The ungodly nations would weep over the destruction of both Babylons (Rev. 18; Jer. 50:46).
 - e. The Israelites were to flee from both Babylons (Rev. 18:4; Jer. 51:6).
 - f. Both cities are depicted as golden cups filled with iniquities from which the nations have drunk and become mad (Rev. 17:1-6; Jer 51:7).
 - g. All heaven rejoices over the destruction of both (Jer. 51:9-10, 48; Rev. 18:20).

III. A PERSONAL HISTORY OF JEREMIAH.

- A. He is called into full-time service during the reign of Josiah (1:1-10). He was to remain unmarried (16:2).
 1. Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest living in Anathoth, some three miles northeast of Jerusalem in the land of Benjamin (1:1).
 2. He received his call to full-time service during the thirteenth year of godly King Josiah (1:2).
 3. Because of his fearless sermons on the coming judgment, Jeremiah was persecuted by his own family (12:6), the townspeople of Anathoth (11:21), and eventually the entire nation of Judah.
 4. As he began his ministry, God showed him two things which underlined the nature and importance of his call.
 - a. He was shown an almond tree rod (1:11-12). Because it flowers earlier than the other trees, the almond signified the near fulfillment of God's proposed judgment.
 - b. He saw a pot of boiling water, tipping southward from the north. This symbolized the Babylonian invasion (1:13-16).
 5. Jeremiah weeps over Judah's coming destruction (4:19-21). He would often do this (see 8:18, 21; 9:1-2, 10; 13:17; 14:17).
 6. He is commanded (like the Greek Diogenes who once ran through the streets of Athens with a lantern trying to find an honest man) by God to "run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in its broad places, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth justice, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon her" (5:1). God had once made a similar arrangement with Abraham concerning Sodom (Gen. 18:23-33).
 7. Jeremiah admits that this dreadful condition existed among the poor and ignorant, but that he felt he could find honest men within the ranks of Judah's educated and rich rulers. However, they too had utterly rejected God (5:4-5).
 8. After a fruitful thirty-one-year reign, Josiah dies. A weeping prophet attends his funeral (2 Chron. 35:25). Judah's last good king had died and it would be downhill spiritually from that point on.
- B. He pleads with Judah to return to God (26:1-7).
 1. God would repeatedly invite Israel back to himself (2:9).
 2. He would receive Israel even after her immorality with other lovers (3:1). This was prohibited under the Mosaic Law (Deut. 24:1-4).
 3. Jeremiah pleaded with them to plow up the hardness of their hearts, lest all be choked up by thorns (4:3-4).
 4. They could still escape judgment by cleansing their hearts and purifying their thoughts (4:14).
 5. To repent meant they could remain in the land (7:3).
 6. To refuse meant to be covered by thick darkness (13:16).
- C. He fearlessly pronounces coming judgment at the hands of the Babylonians. He then lists Judah's sins.
 1. Judah had forsaken the fountain of divine water and built broken cisterns which could not hold water (2:13).
 2. The nation had become a race of evil men (2:21).
 3. No amount of soap or lye could make them clean (2:22).

4. The rulers had stained their clothes with the blood of the innocent and poor (2:34).
 5. They were as an unashamed prostitute (3:3).
 6. They worshiped false gods upon every hill and under every shade tree (3:6).
 7. They had killed their prophets as a lion would slaughter his prey (2:30).
 8. They were as insolent as brass, and hard and cruel as iron (6:28).
 9. They had set up idols right in the Temple and worshiped the pagan "queen of heaven" goddess (7:18).
 10. They had actually sacrificed their little children as burnt offerings to devil gods (7:31; 19:5).
- D. He finally warns them concerning the terrible results of their disobedience.
1. Great armies would march upon Jerusalem (4:6).
 2. Neither Assyria or Egypt could help Judah against Babylon (2:18, 36).
 3. People would flee from Judah's cities as one runs from a hungry lion (4:5-7).
 4. Jerusalem would be surrounded as by hunters who move in on a wild and wounded animal (4:16-17).
 5. They would cry out as a woman in delivery (4:31; 6:24; 13:21).
 6. Jerusalem's own trees would be cut down and used against her walls as battering rams (6:6).
 7. The Temple would be destroyed (7:14).
 8. Enemy troops would then move among the people like poisonous snakes (8:17).
 9. Many would die by the sword (15:3), disease (16:3-4), and starvation (21:9).
 10. Some would be scattered as chaff by the fierce desert winds (13:24).
 11. Unburied corpses would litter the valleys outside Jerusalem, and become food for wild animals and birds (7:32-33; 9:22; 12:8-9).
 12. Judah's enemies would break open the sacred graves of her kings, priests, and prophets, and spread out their bones on the ground before the sun, moon, and stars (8:1-2).
 13. Thousands would be carried away into Babylon for a period of seventy years (7:15; 25:11; 29:10).
 14. The severity of Judah's punishment would astonish the onlooking pagan Gentile nations (19:8; 22:8; 25:11).
- E. When the people ridicule and reject his message, the warning prophet becomes the weeping prophet (4:19; 8:21; 9:1-2, 10; 13:17; 14:17).
- F. Because of his sermons and stand, Jeremiah suffers much.
1. He is persecuted by his own family (12:6).
 2. He is plotted against by the people of his hometown (11:21).
 3. He is rejected and reviled by his peers in the religious world (26:8).
 4. He is threatened by King Jehoiakim (36:26).
 5. He is arrested, flogged, accused of treason, and thrown into prison (37:14-16).
 6. He sees his original manuscript burned by wicked King Jehoiakim (36:21-23). Jeremiah is then commanded to rewrite the burned sections plus a good deal of additional material (36:32).
 7. He is now commanded by God not to pray for Judah (7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 16:5).
 8. He experiences frustration and depression (20:7-9, 14-18).
 9. He writes a letter of encouragement to those Jewish exiles already in Babylon (29).
 10. While in prison, he is ordered by God to buy a field from his cousin Hanameel. This was to demonstrate that someday people would once again own property in Judah, and buy and sell (32:6-15).
 11. Jeremiah sees two baskets of figs in the Temple. God explains that the fresh figs in one represent the Jewish exiles in Babylon (men such as Daniel and Ezekiel), while the rotten fruit in the other depicts Zedekiah and his corrupt officials (24:1-8).
 12. Jeremiah visits the settlement where the Rechabite families live. They assisted in the eradication of Baalism from Israel. Avoiding city life, they lived as shepherds, drinking no wine (35:1-2).
 - a. Jeremiah is commanded to test the people by offering them wine. They immediately refuse (35:5-6).
 - b. Jeremiah then relates this sterling example to Judah, and contrasts the obedience of the Rechabites to the disobedience of Jerusalem (35:12-19).
 13. He preaches a sermon at the Temple gate and is nearly killed by an angry mob for predicting the Temple will be destroyed (26:1-9).
- G. Jeremiah under Nebuchadnezzar.
1. Zedekiah attempts to escape the doomed city, but is captured near Jericho and brought back to Jerusalem. Here he is forced to witness the execution of his own sons, and then submit to the agony of his eyes being gouged out (39:4-7; 52:6-11).
 2. Nebuchadnezzar instructs his chief-of-staff, Nebuzaradan, to treat Jeremiah with kindness (39:11-12).
 3. Jeremiah is released from prison and taken by Nebuzaradan to Ramah. Here he is offered his choice of going on to Babylon, or returning to Jerusalem. Jeremiah chooses to return and is placed under the protection of the new Jewish governor of Jerusalem, a man named Gedaliah (40:1-6; 39:14).
- H. Jeremiah under Gedaliah.

1. Gedaliah attempts to institute a moderate post-war administration over the devastated city of Jerusalem (40:7-12).
 2. This soon arouses the fury of a Jewish rebel leader named Ishmael, who plots to assassinate Gedaliah. The governor is warned of this plot by a man named Johanan, but refuses to take it seriously (40:13-16).
 3. Gedaliah is murdered by Ishmael, along with many other Jewish officials, pilgrims, and some Babylonian soldiers (41:1-4).
 4. Johanan arrives upon the scene of the massacre and soon restores order (41:11-17).
- I. Jeremiah under Johanan.
1. Johanan asks Jeremiah to determine God's will for the tiny Jewish remnant still in Jerusalem (42:1-6).
 2. After a ten-day prayer session with God, Jeremiah is told the Lord desired the remnant to remain in Jerusalem and not go to Egypt, as some were already planning to do (46:7-22).
 3. Upon hearing this unwelcome report, Johanan and other leaders accuse Jeremiah of lying. They then disobey the clearly revealed word of God by going to Egypt. Jeremiah is forced to accompany them (43:1-7).
 4. Upon reaching Egypt, many of the Jews resort to their old habits of idolatry (44:15-19).
 5. Jeremiah pronounces the divine death penalty upon all who refuse to repent and return to Jerusalem (44:7-14, 28).
 6. To dramatize this bitter truth, he buries some large rocks between the pavement stones at the entrance of Pharaoh's palace. This signified that Nebuchadnezzar would occupy Egypt and set his throne upon those stones. Jeremiah predicted he would then kill many of the Jewish remnant who refused to return. The others would die of various plagues or be enslaved (43:8-13).

IV. THE PROPHECIES OF JEREMIAH.

- A. The fall of Jerusalem (1:14-16; 4:5-9; 5:15-17; 6:1-6; 32:2-3; 38:17-18).
- B. The destruction of the Temple (7:11-15; 26:6-9).
- C. The death of the deposed Judean king, Jehoahaz, in Egypt (22:10-12; 2 Ki. 23:34).
- D. The ignoble and unlamented death of King Jehoiakim (36:27-30).
- E. The cutting off from the royal line of King Jehoiachin (22:24-30; 36:30).
- F. The death of two false prophets (Zedekiah and Ahab) and the punishment of another (Shemiah) who were ministering among the first Jewish captive exiles in Babylon (29:20-32).
- G. The death of a false Jerusalem prophet named Hananiah (28:13-17).
- H. The captivity of Seraiah (51:59-64).
- I. The failure of the Egyptian-Judean military alliance against Babylon (37:5-10).
- J. The defeat of Egypt by Babylon (46:1-26).
- K. The eventual occupation of Egypt by Babylon (43:8-13).
- L. The seventy-year captivity of Judah into Babylon (25:11; 29:10).
- M. The restoration after the seventy years to Jerusalem (27:19-22; 29:14; 30:3, 10-11, 18-21; 31:9, 12, 38-39; 33:3-9).
 1. Israel will be gathered back from all over the world (3:14; 31:10; 32:37-43).
 2. God will appoint leaders after his own heart (3:15).
 3. Palestine will once again be filled with the glory of God, and the people of God (3:16-18).
 4. A righteous Branch (the Savior) will occupy King David's throne, ruling with wisdom and justice (23:5-6; 30:21; 33:17).
 5. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and filled with joy and great thanksgiving (31:4, 7-9, 12-14, 23-25; 33:10-12).
- N. The defeat of Babylon after the seventy years (25:12).
- O. The capture of Zedekiah (21:3-7; 34:1-5; 37:17). (See 39:4-7; 52:6-11 for fulfillment.)
- P. The kindly treatment of the godly exiles in Babylon (24:1-7).

V. THE NEW COVENANT OF JEREMIAH.

- A. The nature of the new covenant (31:31-34).
 1. It would embrace the entire house of Israel (31:33).
 2. It would be totally unlike the old Mosaic Covenant (31:32).
 3. God would inscribe his laws upon their hearts (31:33).
 4. This nation with the new hearts would then once again become God's people, and he their God (31:33).
- B. The time of the new covenant (31:33).
- C. The superiority of the new covenant. It will be immutable, unconditional, and eternal, as opposed to the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 19:5-8).
- D. The Mediator of the new covenant: the Son of David himself (30:9; 33:15-18).

VI. CLASSIC PASSAGES IN JEREMIAH: (6:14; 7:11; 8:20, 22; 10:7, 12; 11:19; 13:23; 15:1, 16; 16:14-15; 17:5-10; 18:1-6; 20:7-9, 13-15; 21:8; 23:29; 29:11-14; 30:7; 31:3, 8-9, 15, 22; 32:17, 27; 33:3, 22; 46:27; 47:6).