

Introduction To Jeremiah

Introduction:

1. **No book better fits with our own time than Jeremiah. No prophet better shows us how to deal with it than Jeremiah.**
 - a. “Jeremiah is one of the bravest, tenderest, and most pathetic figures in history; and his book of prophecies is one which everybody should read. Indeed, there is good reason why we should read the prophecies of Jeremiah with much thoughtfulness just now, for there is no little correspondence between the fateful day of this noble prophet and our own” (J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore The Book*, p. 259).
 - b. “The man and his message and his times are inseparably bound together, and must be interpreted together” (Baxter, *ibid*, p. 259).

2. **“Jeremiah was the prophet of Judah’s midnight hour”** (Baxter, *ibid*, p. 259).
 - a. No prophet worked any harder than he did.
 - b. No prophet got less results.

3. **Jeremiah is the second of the “major prophets”.**
 - a. “Major” not in impact or importance - but size.
 - b. Is the longest of the major prophets. (Though Isaiah has 66 chapters and Jeremiah only 52, Isaiah is slightly shorter than Jeremiah).

4. **The Prophets & The Prophetical Books**
 - a. *The fourth section in O.T.*
 - i. Law: Genesis - Deuteronomy
 - ii. History: Joshua - Esther
 - iii. Poetry / Wisdom: Job - Song of Sol.
 - iv. Prophets: Isaiah - Malachi
 - b. *How many:* 17 books of the prophets - 16 prophets (Jeremiah wrote two).
 - c. *Period Covered:* “The whole period of the Prophets, roughly, covered about 400 years, 800 - 400 B.C.” (Henry Halley, *Pocket Bible Handbook*, p. 251).
 - d. *Work:* (cf. Halley, p. 251).
 - i. Save the nation from idolatry & wickedness.
 - ii. Failing this, the announce the nation will be destroyed.
 - iii. Yet, remnant will be saved.
 - iv. Tell of the coming Messiah - (out of the remnant).

* Hailey: Work three points: (1) Dealing with the prevailing conditions of the day [social, spiritual, moral & political] (2) God and the nations and (3) Messianic Hope (Homer Hailey, *Hailey’s Comments I*, p. 70).
 - e. *Classified by:*
 - i. Period: Pre-exile; Exile or Post-exile.
 - ii. Nation: To North (Israel) or to South (Judah).

5. **Jeremiah is a pre-exile prophet who worked in the south.**

- I. **The Man - Jeremiah** - “Indeed, we cannot properly study this Book of Jeremiah without studying Jeremiah himself; for the man is as much the book as the prophecies which he uttered” (J. Sidlow Baxter, *ibid*, p. 260).
- A. *Name:* Jeremiah means “Jehovah hurls”, “Jehovah exalts” or “whom Jehovah appoints”.
- B. *Family:*
1. Son of Hilkiah who was a priest (1:1). Thus was from a priestly family like Ezekial and Zechariah (Ezek. 1:3; Neh. 12:1,4,16; Zech. 1:1). (*Many think the Kilkiah was the priest of 2 Kings 22 who brought the book of God to the attention of Josiah.*)
 2. Never married (16:2-5).
- C. *Home:* Anathoth, a priestly village located in Benjamin, about 3 miles NE of Jerusalem (1:1; Josh. 21:18).
- D. *Called to be a prophet at an early age:*
1. Before he was born - God knew he would be a prophet (1:5).
 2. Called in his youth (1:6). Perhaps 20 or older.
- E. *Character:*
1. Timid - (1:6-ff).
 2. Sensitive / Caring - Called the “The weeping prophet”.
 - a. Jer. 4:19-20; 8:21-22; 9:1; 13:17; 23:9.
 - b. “Jeremiah’s nature was such that he simply could not be merely a *transmitter*, able to detach his own feelings from that which he was commissioned to declare” (Baxter, *ibid*, p. 260).
 - c. “He did not merely speak *for* God, he felt *with* Him; and he did not merely speak to the people; he felt with *them*” (Baxter, *ibid*, p. 261).
 - d. He became one with God and his message. “Every prediction of coming judgment is soaked in tears; every pleading is punctuated with sobs” (Baxter, *ibid*, p. 261).
 3. Persistent -
 - a. Pressed on for 40-50 years with little results. “But through forty years Jeremiah never once saw any grateful response” (Baxter, *ibid*, p. 261).
 - b. “He stood alone, as God’s spokesman, unheeded, humiliated, yet bravely persistent” (Baxter, *ibid*, p. 261).
 4. Love for God and his message (20:9).
- F. “Apparently he has some personal wealth because he was able to purchase real estate and hire an scribe” (Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines*

On the Old Testament, p. 522).

G. *Wrote Jeremiah and Lamentations.*

H. *Tradition says he died in Egypt as an old man.*

II. Time / Date of His Work

A. *From 625 B.C. until after 586 B.C. (fall of Jerusalem).*

1. Began his work in **625 B.C.** (13th year of Josiah [1:2]).
2. Lasted until after the fall of Jerusalem in **586 B.C.**
3. Over 40 years (some has a long as 60).
4. "So, the prophet Jeremiah lived to see his beloved nation go down into sin, war and judgment..." (Warren Wiersbe, *ibid*, p. 522).

B. *About 100 years after Isaiah.*

C. *Time of Judah's last five kings:*

1. Josiah - 640-609 B.C.
2. Jehoahaz - 609 B.C.
3. Jehoikim - 609-597 B.C.
4. Jehoikin - 597 B.C.
5. Zedekiah - 597-587 B.C.

D. *Contemporary with:*

1. Zephaniah - (630 B.C. - 625 B.C. During reign of Josiah).
2. Habakkuk - (612 B.C. - 606 B.C.)
3. Obadiah - (Some think so putting the date 586 B.C.)
4. Ezekial - among the exiles in Babylon
5. Daniel - in the Babylonian court

III. Background (2 Kings 21-25; 2 Chron. 33-36).

A. *Judah's spiritual condition: Steeped in sin and ripe for destruction.*

1. Israel has already fallen to Assyria (721 B.C.); Judah alone is left.
2. Judah had ignored the constant warning of the prophets - thus, given to idolatry and wickedness.
 - a. After Hezekiah's death, Manassah (697-642 B.C.) introduced more idolatry.
 - b. Went so far that offered their children to idol Molech (7:30-31; 32:35).
3. Josiah (640-609 B.C.) brought reform by tearing down the alters, etc.

B. *International Politics: Babylon becomes the world power.*

1. Babylon is the backdrop for Jeremiah as Assyria was for Isaiah. (Babylon

- is mentioned 168 times in the book.)
2. Three powers vying for supremacy: Assyria, Babylon & Egypt.
 3. Assyria fell leaving the battle between Babylon and Egypt.
 - a. Assyria's capital, Nineveh, fell in 612 B.C. to Babylon.
 - b. With the death of Josiah (609 B.C.) Judah was caught in the middle.
 - (1) Reform under Josiah was only outward on the part of the people (3:10).
 - (2) Jeremiah says little about Josiah, but esteemed him highly because he wept at his passing (2 Chron. 35:25).
 4. Babylon invaded Judah:
 - a. **606 B.C.** - 1st invasion & 1st captives taken.
 - (1) 20 years after Jeremiah's call to prophecy.
 - (2) Daniel taken in the 1st group.
 - b. **597 B.C.** - 2nd invasion & 2nd captives taken
 - (1) 10,000 captives taken.
 - (2) Ezekial in this group (2 Kings 24:10-17; Ezek. 1:1-3).
 - c. **586. B.C.** - 3rd invasion and final group of captives taken.
 - (1) Jerusalem complete devastated.
 - (2) Temple destroyed.
 5. Babylon was the world power for 70 years.
 - a. From 606 B. C. to 536 B.C.
 - b. Babylon fell to the Medes (536).
 - c. This was the 70 year of captivity / exile for Judah.
 6. When Jerusalem fell (586) Jeremiah remained in Judah with a small group of Jews that Nebuchadnezzar permitted to stay.
 - a. When Gedaliah, the appointed governor, was slain, this remnant fled to Egypt.
 - b.** Jeremiah was taken with them (Jer. 40-44).

IV. Message / Theme of The Book: "Doom" - Judgment at the hand of Babylon is inevitable

- A. *Condemnation* (Denunciation, *Houchen*)
 1. See: Jer. 6:10-16; 25:8-11
 2. Word "backslide" is a key word. (See: 2:19; 3:6, 8, 11-12, 14, 22; 49:4).
- B. *Plea to repent* (Invitation, *Houchen*)
 1. See: Jer. 7:3; 18:7-11.
 2. That plea for more than 40 years was ignored.
- C. *Hope for the future* (Consolation, *Houchen*)
 1. In 70 years a remnant would return (25; 30-33).
 2. Ultimate future in the Messiah & his new covenant (31).

V. Outline

Introduction: The prophet's call (1)

I. **National – Messages to Judah** (2-33)

- A. *Condemnation* (2-20)
 - 1. The national generally (2-20)
 - 2. The leaders specifically (21-24)
- B. *Captivity* (25-29)
- C. *Restoration* (30-33)

II. **Personal – Jeremiah's Suffering** (34-45)

- A. *Before the siege of Jerusalem* (34-39)
- B. *After the siege, with the remnant* (40-45)

III. **International – Message to the Nations** (46-51)

- A. *Egypt* (46)
- B. *Philistia* (47)
- C. *Moab* (48)
- D. *Ammon* (49:1-16)
- E. *Edom* (49:17-22)
- F. *Syria, Kedar, Elam* (49:23-29)
- G. *Babylon* (50-51)

Conclusion: The prophet's captivity and release (52)

Warren W. Wiersbe

VI. Chronology In The Book

- A. *There is no chronology in the book - it does not flow in order.*
- B. *How the chapters fit into the time periods:*
 - 1. Under Josiah (627-608 B.C.) - chapters 1-20.
 - 2. Under Jehoiakim (608-597 B.C.) - chapters 25-26; 35-36; 45.
 - 3. Under Zedekiah (597 - 586 B.C.) - chapters 21-24; 27-29; 34; 37-39; 52.
 - 4. After Fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) - 40-44.
 - 5. Undated messages: 30-33; 46-51.

C. *Message is more moral than structural.*

VII. The Messiah In Jeremiah

A. *“Although the message may be alluded to in other passages, only three definitely Messianic passages will be considered here” (Homer Hailey, *The Messiah of prophecy to The Messiah on the throne*, p. 160).*

B. *Three sections:*

1. Jer. 3:11-19 - call to repentance and future blessings.
2. Jer. 23:1-8 - David’s righteous branch.
3. Jer. 30-33 - The New Covenant and the Davidic rule.

VIII. Lessons Learned From Jeremiah

A. *God is still on his throne - in control.*

B. *National deterioration and disaster is due fundamentally to disregarding and disobeying God.*

C. *God does not measure service to him merely in terms of success.*

1. *“From a human point of view the prophet was fighting a losing battle throughout his forty to fifty years of work” (Homer Hailey, *Bible Class Note: Jeremiah - Ezekiel*, p. 1).*
2. *Jeremiah wasn’t successful in many conversions - yet his work pleased God.*

D. *In our own day - more like the days of Jeremiah than Pentecost.*

E. *How far disregard for God’s word can go.*

Conclusion:

1. The book was penned by Baruch (36:4, 17; 43:16).
2. *“Everyone’s life will be richer for having spent a few hours with this good and humble servant of Jehovah” (Homer Hailey, *Hailey’s Comments I*, p. 97).*