

CLASS NOTES - JEREMIAH

Jeremiah himself

He was a priest (or at least the son of one) according to Jer. 1:1. He was also "ordained" as a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5).¹ He was tender hearted, the author of Lamentations ("weepings"), and is known as the "weeping prophet." He was courageous, faithful and, in spite of being accused of being a traitor, was a true patriot -- a great man of God.

Historical Background

Before his ministry began he must have lived through the closing days of wicked king Manasseh. Manasseh was the most evil king Judah ever had. Judah was later doomed to judgment because of his great wickedness (2 Kings 21:10 - 16; 22:17; 23:26; 24:3; 2 Chron. 33:12 - 16). Late in life, however, he was gloriously converted (2 Chron. 33:12 - 19).

Jeremiah lived during the two years reign of Amon also and it wasn't until the thirteenth year of the reign of good king Josiah that his written ministry began.

The Assyrians had taken the northern kingdom (Israel) into captivity many years before Jeremiah appeared on the scene. The Babylonian Empire then arose and Assyria's capital, Nineveh, fell before their military might (see the book of Nahum). Shortly after its destruction king Josiah met his death in the valley of Megiddo when he tried to keep Pharaoh from going to the aid of the Assyrians (2 Kings 23:29 should read, "Pharaoh ... went up to the king of Assyria [to help him]" -- NASB). Then, twenty two and a half years later, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took Judah into captivity.

Jeremiah prophesied for over forty years. He began his ministry during the thirteenth year of the thirty one year reign of Josiah (Jer. 25:3). Five years after Jeremiah began his ministry a revival began in Judah under the twenty six year old Josiah (2 Kings 22:3). It seems certain that Jeremiah must have had a part in bringing about this revival as he ministered to Josiah. After the death of Josiah Jeremiah continued his ministry for twenty two and a half years under four evil kings. He lived through the destruction of Jerusalem and continued, for an undisclosed duration of time, prophesying to the remnant -- first in Jerusalem and then in Egypt, where he evidently died.

He was contemporary with six well known prophets. In Jerusalem, before the fall of the city, he served with Nahum (since he wrote before the fall of Nineveh), Zephaniah, Habakkuk

¹The Hebrew word used in Jer. 1:5 is translated "ordained" only here and in 2 Kings 23:5 (KJV). The word is used 1,951 times in the OT. It is translated as follows" (major uses only): "give" - 1,023 times; "deliver" - 156; "make" - 108; "put" - 195; "set forth" - 101; "lay" - 31. It is also translated "appoint," "bring," "cause," "grant," "send forth," "be given," etc. It is translated **69 different ways** (KJV) -- not counting other forms of the same word! Yet the Mormons use this verse (Jer. 1:5) to "prove" the pre-existence of the soul. They say that Jeremiah had an Ordination Service before he was even conceived by his mother! The use and translations of this word make their interpretation a **JOKE!** Jer. 1:5 could better be translated, "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I **gave** thee a prophet unto the nations." No "Ordination Ceremony" was involved!

and a non-writing prophetess, Huldah. In Babylon both Daniel and Ezekiel ministered during the time of Jeremiah.

Relationship between the last five kings of Judah and the prophecies of Jeremiah

* **Josiah** (he reigned 31 years, 18 of them during Jeremiah's ministry). "Probably the first 12 chapters of Jeremiah fall in Josiah's reign" (J. Sidlow Baxter). Chapters 1 -- 6 probably refer to the reign of Josiah before he started his program of reform upon the discovery of the Law (when he was 26). There is no reference to the last years of Josiah's reign, though he commends Josiah himself (22:15, 16) and wept at his death (22:10; 2 Chron. 35:25). Josiah was a good king, but his revival was shallow. It was "too little and too late" for Judah. See 2 Kings 22:1, 2, 20; 23:12 - 16, 25, 26.

* **Jehoahaz** (he reigned 3 months). There is reference to him in 22:10 - 12. He was an evil king.

* **Jehoiakim** (reigned 11 years). He, too, was an evil king. Chapters 26, 27 have to do with the beginning of his reign. Chapters 25 and 36 deal with the fourth year of his reign, just before the battle of Carchemish where Egypt was defeated by the Chaldeans. See Jeremiah chapter 46. Jeremiah chapter 35 also is dated "during the days of his reign."

* **Jehoiakin**, also called "Jeconiah" and "Coniah" (He reigned only three months). He is mentioned in 22:24, 28; 24:1; 27:20; 28:4; 29:2; 37:1; 52:31.

* **Zedekiah** (Like the three before him, he was an evil king. He reigned 11 years). Since he was the king when Jerusalem was taken and Judah went into captivity, he is prominent in this book. See chapters 21 through 24, 28 through 32 (probably chapter 33 also), 34, and 37 through 39.

The outline of Jeremiah (From "Explore The Book" by J. Sidlow Baxter)

The book of Jeremiah -- "Wrath to the full but love to the end."

- * Introduction -- Jeremiah commissioned (chapter 1).
- * Prophecies, particular and undated (2 -- 20).
- * Prophecies, particular and dated (21 -- 39).
- * Prophecies after the fall of Jerusalem (40 -- 44).
- * Prophecies on Gentile nations (45 -- 51).
- * Jerusalem overthrown (chapter 52).

The "signs" in Jeremiah

* **The Almond rod.** 1:11, 12. The Almond tree is the first tree to blossom in the Spring. It is symbolic of judgment to come **SOON!**

* **The seething (boiling) pot.** 1:13 - 16. Their judgment is to be severe and it is to come from the north.

* **The linen girdle.** 13:1 - 11. Their pride is to be destroyed in the region of the Euphrates River.

* **The unmarried prophet.** 16:2 - 4. In the tense days of judgment ahead, it is no time for the joys of normal life.

* **The potter's house.** 18:2 - 6 & following. God, in His sovereignty, has the divine right to change His plans as men respond.

* **The figs.** 24:1 - 10. Those taken into captivity with Jehoiakin, not those left behind

with Zedekiah, were the good figs,

* **The wine cup of fury.** 25:15 - 28. All nations are to drink of His wrath through Nebuchadnezzar.

* **The yokes.** 27:1 - 11. The nations are to submit to serve Nebuchadnezzar. If they follow the false prophets and don't submit, their servitude will be even harder -- with yokes of **IRON** (28:1 - 17).

* **The field of Hanamel.** 32:7 - 15. There **will be** a return to the land.

* **The hidden stones.** 43:8 - 13. Egypt, to which they have fled for safety, will be attacked and conquered by Nebuchadnezzar. The small Jewish remnant will be caught in a trap.

What the people said -- the thinking of Judah under Josiah

There were many professions of righteousness: "I will not transgress" (2:20); "I am not polluted" (2:23); "I have not sinned" (2:35); "Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn from me" (2:35); "Why has the LORD our God done these things to us?" (5:19).

They professed to be very religious: "The LORD liveth!" (5:2); "The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD!" (3:16); and in the time of trouble they will say, "Arise and save us" (2:27).

There was, however, no real seeking of the LORD on their part either by Israel (2:4, 6) or the priests (2:8). They said, "We are free to roam, we will come no more to Thee" (2:31 NASB). They did **NOT** say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God who gives rain in its season, both the Autumn and Spring rain, who kept for us the appointed weeks of harvest" (5:24 NASB).

They had no real hope in the LORD. They said, "There is no hope; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (2:25); "If a man put away his wife, and she go from him and become another man's, shall he return to her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted?" (3:1). In answer to these last two questions God replied, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD" (3:1).

They were very rebellious. (The words "rebel" or "rebellious" are used 16 times in the book of Ezekiel concerning Judah.) They said, "We will not walk therein [in the 'old paths']" (6:16); and "We will not listen [to the sound of the trumpet]" (6:17).

They rejected the true prophets of God. They lied about the LORD and said, "Not He; misfortune will not come on us; and we will not see sword or famine. The prophets are as wind, and the word is not in them. Thus [as the true prophets predict judgment on Judah] it will be done to **THEM**" (5:12, 13 - NASB).

Notice the questions God asked **them** -- (2:14, 21, 29, 26, 31, 33).

The New Covenant

The New Covenant is found in Jer. 31:31 - 34; 32:37 - 41; 33:8. See references to it also in Isa. 54:13, 14; 59:21; Heb. 8:6 - 13; 9:15, 16. The main points of the New Covenant are:

- * It is **NEW** -- not the same as the Old Covenant. It is **NOT LAW** (Jer. 31:31, 32).
- * God will write His laws in their hearts, not on stone (see 2 Cor. 3:3 and context).
- * He will forgive their sins and remember them no more (Jer. 31:34).
- * It will be all-inclusive and effectual to Israel. **ALL** Israel will be saved. (Jer. 31:34 with Rom. 11:26).

- * It will be an eternal covenant (Jer. 32:40).
- * Israel will be planted in their own land (Jer. 32:41).
- * It is made with **ISRAEL** (Jer. 31;33). However we get in on some of the **spiritual** provisions of it **by grace** (Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 3:3).

The "Servitude," the "Desolations," and the "Captivity"

The "**Servitude**" began with Jehoiakim's submission to Nebuchadnezzar -- in 606 bc. (Jer. 27:6 - 17; 28:14). **It ended 70 years later**, with the proclamation of Cyrus (536 bc.) freeing the Jews to return to their own land (Jer. 29:10, 11; Ezra 1:1 - 4).

The "**Desolations**" began when Jerusalem was surrounded by the army of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 25:11, 12; Dan. 9:2). **They ended, 70 years later**, with the laying of the foundation for the temple (Hag. 2:10, 15, 18) during the reign of Darius. See Ezra 4:24; 5:1, 2, 5. The end of the period is noted by Haggai (1:2; 2:15 - 19). See "Explore the Book" by J. Sidlow Baxter, vol. 4, pages 229, 230 and "The Coming Prince" by Sir Robert Anderson, pages 55, 56.

The "**Captivity.**" In 606 bc. the Servitude began. It closed 70 years later with Cyrus' decree allowing the captives to return to Jerusalem. But for 16 of the 70 years they had been more or less secure in their own land. Another 2 years they were in Jerusalem, but under siege. After 18 years of the 70 had passed they finally were taken to Babylon. There they remained as captives for **only 52 years** -- until Cyrus allowed them to return. See the time chart on page 3 of "Class Notes on Daniel."

Passages of special interest.

Against Babylon -- (50:2 - 9, 17 - 20 [mostly still future]; 51:4 - 10, 25 - 31, 45 [compare Rev. 18]). See also -- 32:17, 18; 33:15 - 18; 34:8 - 17; 35:1 - 19; 44:18 [with the context].

The false prophets

2:18; 5:12, 13 (see the Amplified Bible if available); 5:30, 31; 6:13, 14; 7:4 (Amplified); 8:10, 11; 14:13 - 15; 23:9, 11, 14, 16, 25 - 32; 27:9, 10, 14 - 18; 28:1 - 17; 29:8, 9, 21, 23; 37:17 - 19.

False Pastors & Shepherds ("pastor" and "shepherd" are the same word in the Hebrew).

2:8; 10:21; 23:1, 2, 4; 25:34 - 36; 50:6. Compare Ezek. 34:2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 23; Isa. 40:11; 44:28; Zech. 10:3. Contrast Psa. 23:1 & John chapter 10.

The persecution of Jeremiah

1:8, 19; 11:21, 22; 15:15, 20, 21; 18:18, 22, 23; 20:2, 7, 10, 11 - 13; 26:8 - 24; 32:2, 3, 8, 12; 34:1, 2; chapters 36, 37; 38:4 - 13, 28; 39:11 - 14. Compare 2 Chron. 36:16, 17.

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