



Overview for Jeremiah

Purpose: Jeremiah's discourse to the people of Judah was a plea for them to repent of their sins and return to serving God. His messages were Judah's final warnings before destruction came at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah also reiterated God's mercy and the fact that the people of Judah would eventually return to their land after their Babylonian captivity.

Author: Jeremiah

Time Period Covered: About 627 to 586 B.C.

History: Jeremiah, whose name meant "Yahweh [God] establishes," was born around 650 B.C. in Anathoth (a city about three miles north of Jerusalem) during the reign of Manasseh. Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of Judah's last five kings, and during a portion of Judah's Babylonian captivity. His ministry lasted over forty years, until after Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 B.C. When Judah was defeated by Babylon, most of Jeremiah's countrymen were taken captive, but he continued to live in the ruins of Jerusalem. Tradition states that Jeremiah was taken to Egypt against his will and eventually executed in 570 B.C.

Key People: Jeremiah, Baruch, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, Ebed-Melech, Nebuchadnezzar

Setting: Jeremiah's family was of the priestly lineage of Aaron and his hometown was close to Jerusalem. His prophetic ministry took place in Judah, beginning around 627 B.C., during Josiah's thirteenth year as king. Josiah had instituted several reforms in his attempt to turn Judah back to God, but his reign was cut short when he was killed on the battlefield in 608 B.C. Josiah was Judah's last godly king; the four following

kings were idolaters who disregarded Jeremiah's messages of judgment. During the following twenty-three years, Judah's kings led the nation into a sharp decline, resulting in their destruction at the hand of the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Jeremiah spoke God's message among a host of false prophets who typically said the opposite of what he prophesied. Jeremiah asserted that he was the true prophet of God, and even though at times he wanted to cease from prophesying, he said that God's Word "was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20:9). The people of Judah also rejected Jeremiah's messages, and he suffered imprisonment and public humiliation during much of his ministry.

Summary: The Book of Jeremiah, a compilation of prophecies, history, and biographical information, is the second longest prophetic book in the Old Testament and is not arranged in standardized chronological order. The first chapter is a prologue that identifies the prophet and describes his call. Chapters 2 through 33 are a series of pronouncements of judgment against Judah by the prophet. Chapters 34 through 45 concern Jeremiah's ministry and the siege of Jerusalem. The remainder of the book contains Jeremiah's messages to the nations, concluding with the fall of Jerusalem.

The Book of Jeremiah is the only prophetic book in the Old Testament that gives so many personal details about the life and service of the writer. In addition to his account of God's calling him to be a prophet at a young age, Jeremiah described his persecution at the hand of the people of Judah, and his grief at their rejection of his message, earning him the title of the "weeping prophet." Baruch was Jeremiah's scribe, and he faithfully wrote what Jeremiah dictated to him.

Timeline

See “The Divided Kingdom” four-page timeline included in this unit.

Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.*

- I. Prologue (1:1-19)
 - A. The identification of the prophet (1:1-3)
 - B. The enlistment of the prophet (1:4-10)
 - C. The instruction of the prophet (1:11-19)
- II. The pronouncement of judgment against Judah (2:1 — 45:5)
 - A. The condemnation of the prophet (2:1 — 25:38)
 - B. The conflicts of the prophet (26:1 — 29:32)