

# Jeremiah

## Introduction—Chapter 1

Part of a division of the Old Testament called the ‘major prophets’

- Three books: Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel

Jeremiah is the 2<sup>nd</sup> longest book in the Old Testament...(Not by chapters)

- It has 21,835 words, Ezekiel has 18,835, and Isaiah with 16,932

Jeremiah—quoted in the New Testament

Mat. 2: 16-18; Heb. 8: 8-12

## Jeremiah the prophet

Jeremiah was born about 646 BC at Anathoth a Levitical town, the son of Hilkiah, who was of a priestly family (from Aaron)

Jeremiah was chosen by God to be a prophet before he was born [Chapter 1: 5]

His ministry began in 627 BC in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Josiah of Judah...he continued preaching in Jerusalem until its fall in 586 BC



Chapters 40-44 indicate that his ministry continued beyond Jerusalem's fall to around 582 BC

His ministry covered the last five kings of Judah...his work overlapped with that of Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Ezekiel towards the last part of his ministry

- He is credited with also writing the book of Lamentations and I & 2 Kings

(Bible Knowledge Commentary) "In his book Jeremiah included a number of chronological references that help date many of his prophecies

## His message to Jerusalem

Much of his preaching was to the residents of Jerusalem who were about to be conquered by the Babylonians



(Expositors) “From the beginning of his ministry, Jeremiah never deviated from the position that Judah and Jerusalem were to be destroyed by a nation from the north, and the people carried into captivity” (4: 5-9; 6: 22-26)

Jeremiah was a witness to the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians

- Jerusalem’s walls were breached in 586 BC and the temple was burned

(Nelson Study Bible) “Several times during the siege of Jerusalem, Zedekiah came to Jeremiah for counsel from the Lord. The prophet advised him to surrender, but Zedekiah would not listen”

(Nelson Study Bible) “Jeremiah’s message of judgment also contained a word of hope: A righteous remnant would be restored...God promised to bring the people back from captivity and restore them to a blessing”

A message of judgment for idolatry and the need to repent

During his day the people of Judah, having lost their freedom to foreign powers...they did not turn to God but to idols...**idolatry** was the reason for Jeremiah's proclamation of judgment to come upon them

Jeremiah constantly over and over warned the people of their apostasy and idolatry—that because of that, they would face the same fate as the northern tribes, who had gone into captivity around 130 years earlier

He warned the people of Judah/Jerusalem to repent or else they would face destruction at the hands of the Babylonians

(Expositors) “Jeremiah preached more about repentance than any other prophet”

## Five kings of Judah reign during Jeremiah's ministry

Josiah (640—609 BC)

Josiah was a good king in Judah who followed God and brought about many religious reforms

- Jeremiah began preaching during Josiah's reign (627 BC)

Jehoahaz (609 BC)

Son of Josiah, (Bad king) reigns for three months then was captured by the king of Egypt and never returned to Judah; **Egypt** principle power at this time (in Palestine)

Jehoiakim (609—598 BC)

Another son of Josiah, was appointed king by Pharaoh of Egypt...being subservient to Egypt, he taxes Judah heavy to pay tribute to Egypt;

- Bad king reigns 11 years; His given name was Eliakim but Pharaoh changed it to Jehoiakim...Egypt loses a battle to Babylon in 605 BC
  - Babylon becomes principle power

Jehoiachin (597 BC)

Also known as **Jeconiah**; grandson of Josiah; ruled only 3 months; bad king Rebelled against Babylon, taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, later released (561 BC)

- Christ comes from his line (Matthew 1:14)

Zedekiah (597—586 BC)

3<sup>rd</sup> son of Josiah; Reigns 11 years; subservient to Babylon

Given name was Mattaniah; king of Babylon changes it to Zedekiah

- Babylon conquers Judah at the end of his reign, he was taken to Babylon, his eyes put out, his sons killed

Babylon becomes the principle power in the world

612 BC Babylon conquers Nineveh capital of Assyria; Assyria no longer the power in the region

While Babylon was occupied with Assyria, Egypt asserts power over Palestine including Judah

- Judah becomes a vassal state to Egypt and forced to pay tribute

605 BC Babylon defeats Egypt at the battle of Carchemish, becomes the world ruling power of the day

- They incorporate Judah into the Babylonian empire

605 BC Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made the king of Judah, Jehoiakim swear allegiance; He takes many captives from Judah to Babylon (Often called the 1<sup>st</sup> Babylonian captivity)

- Daniel was one of the nobility who was taken prisoner

Three sieges of Jerusalem when Jewish people were taken to Babylon: 605, 597, 586 BC

- 1) 605—A number of nobles taken...Daniel taken as prisoner to Babylon
- 2) 597—Leading citizens deported ...Ezekiel taken as prisoner to Babylon
- 3) 586—Final siege...Jeremiah witnesses Babylon conquering Jerusalem, majority of people taken as prisoners

Babylon becomes the principle power during Jeremiah's ministry

605  
Babylon defeats  
Egypt at Carchemish

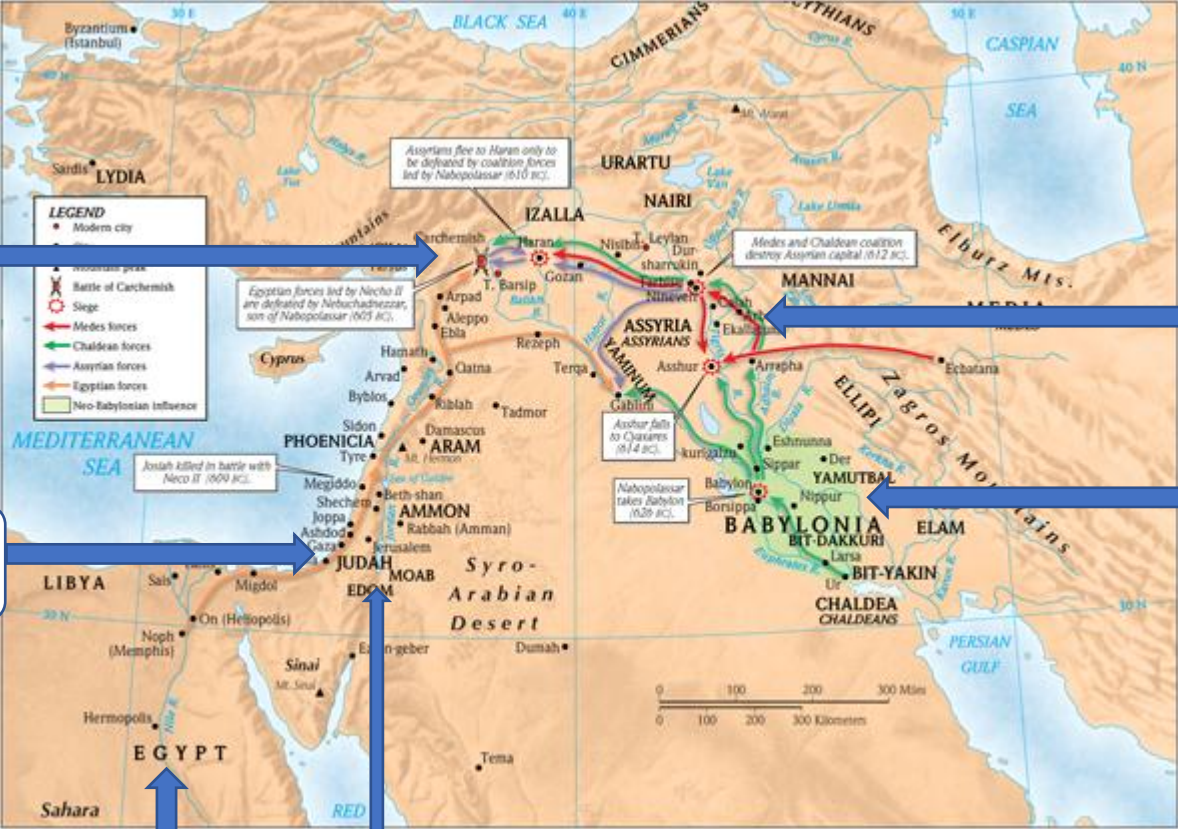
612 BC  
Babylon conquers Assyria

Babylon

Judah/Jerusalem

Egypt

Egypt moves to control Palestine while  
Babylon is occupied with Assyria



Jeremiah's message was primarily to Judah but much broader to the nations of **Israel**

Jeremiah had a two-fold commission [Ch. 1: 10]

1) To root out and pull down—to proclaim the coming destruction of Judah

- Babylon fulfilled the prophecy of Judah's destruction 'to root out and pull down' (586-585) BC

➤ Duality: the destruction of modern Israel in the end time

2) To build and plant—to plant people in another land that will establish a kingdom from David's line (Zedekiah's daughter)

- The nation of Israel will be established (built) again
  - When Christ returns (2<sup>nd</sup> exodus)



Themes of the book

God's judgment/punishment for sin—idolatry

Personal life of Jeremiah

The need for a new covenant

Addressing false prophets

## Outline of the book

### Chapter 1-45

Prophecies of Israel/Judah and the millennium

### Chapters 46-51

Prophecies to foreign nations

### Chapter 52

Historical conclusion

## Chapter 1

### Jeremiah's background, calling and mission

1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin,

- Jeremiah's father Hilkiah was of the house of Ithamar, he was of a priestly line of Aaron
- His father was probably not the high priest Hilkiah of II Kings 22: 8 of the house of Eleazar who had discovered the copy of the law during the time of Josiah

(Bible Knowledge Commentary) "The name Hilkiah was evidently a common name given to several men in the Old Testament who were priests or Levites"

Anathoth was a city of priests located about 3 miles northeast of Jerusalem...it was a city that had been allocated to the priests by Joshua (Joshua 21: 15-19)

Time frame of his calling (627—586 BC)

2 to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

v. 2 Josiah reigned (640—609)

- Jeremiah receives his call from God during the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Josiah (627 BC) to begin his ministry

v. 3 Two other kings of Judah who ruled during Jeremiah's reign are not mentioned here, probably because their reigns were so short

v. 3 [Last part] “until the carrying away of Jerusalem in the **5<sup>th</sup> month**”—586 BC

## The call of the prophet (v. 4-10)

4 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

v. 5 Jeremiah was ‘sanctified’ or set apart or hallowed by God before his birth for a special purpose

“I **ordained** you a prophet”

➤ He was chosen/consecrated for his special commission as a prophet ‘to the nations’

John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and Paul had also been set aside for a special purpose before being born  
Luke 1:13-15; Isaiah 49:1, 5 ; Galatians 1:15

v. 5 [Last part] “a prophet to the nations”— chapters (46-52) are directed to many Gentile nations

- However “nations” here at the beginning of the book are directed primarily to Judah and Israel
  - To Israel—primarily of the end time

6 Then said I: “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”

7 But the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.

8 Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,” says the Lord.

v. 6 “I cannot speak”—referring to a lack of speaking ability to be in public ministry

“I am a youth”—scholars believe he was around 16-20 years of age when **called to be a prophet**

v. 7-8 God shows Jeremiah that his youth was not important to Him

- His success and safety were dependent upon God: “do not be afraid, For I am with you to deliver you”

## Jeremiah's unusual commission

9 Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me:

10 “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant.”

### v. 9 “touched my mouth”

A figure that God would put words in his mouth, that He was the source of the prophet's message

### v. 10 Jeremiah's two-fold commission

1) “to destroy and throw down”—Jeremiah pronounced judgment on Judah

➤ The people and kings of David's line would be overthrown, uprooted and taken to Babylon

2) “to build and to plant”—to plant people in another land that will establish a kingdom from David's line  
(Zedekiah's daughter)

- The nation of Israel will be established again
  - When Christ returns (2<sup>nd</sup> exodus)

Two visions given to Jeremiah confirming his call—to preach

11 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.”

12 Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.”

v. 11 1<sup>st</sup> vision—an almond tree

An almond tree blossoms while others are dormant...**a sign** of spring which is the beginning of the season

v. 12 (KJV) “Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it”

Almond tree (Heb. *shaqed*)= the almond (from *shoqad*)  
‘hasten’ (Heb. *shoqad*)= watch over/alert/ready

v. 12 The meaning of the 1<sup>st</sup> vision:

- God watches over/ready **to perform His word**= the judgment upon Judah for their sin and rebellion
  - Jeremiah would preach this coming judgment



## 2<sup>nd</sup> vision confirming his call

13 And the word of the Lord came to me the second time, saying, “What do you see?”  
And I said, “I see a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north.”

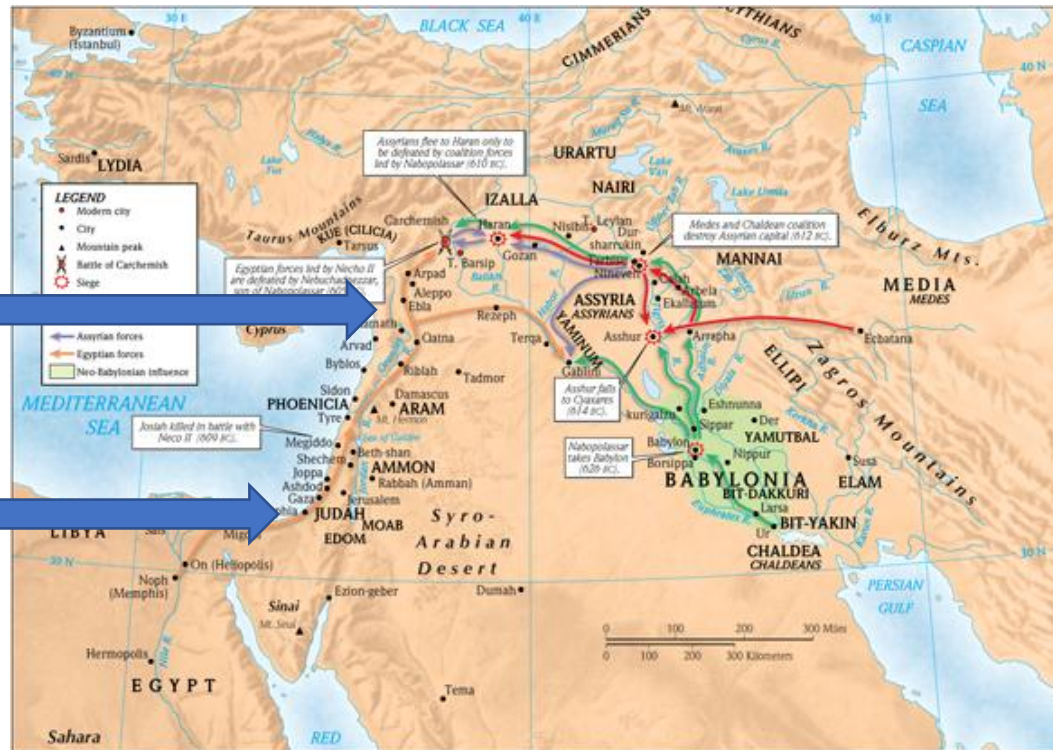
14 Then the Lord said to me: “Out of the north calamity shall break forth On all the inhabitants of the land.

v. 13-14 The ‘boiling pot’ of judgment tilted southward

- The direction in which Babylon would attack Judah and Jerusalem—**from the north**

Babylon has to go around the desert  
and attack from the north

Judah



## The coming judgment and the reasons for it

15 For behold, I am calling All the families of the kingdoms of the north,” says the Lord; “They shall come and each one set his throne At the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, Against all its walls all around,

16 And against all the cities of Judah. I will utter My judgments Against them concerning all their wickedness, Because they have forsaken Me, Burned incense to other gods, And worshiped the works of their own hands.

v. 15 ‘kingdoms of the north’—Babylon and its allies

‘set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem’= a metaphor for a foreign takeover of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 20: 4

For thus says the Lord: Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and your eyes shall see it. I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them away captive to Babylon and slay them with the sword.

v. 16 **The reason** for the coming judgment

➤ Their wickedness...they have forsaken Me...burned incense to other gods...worshipped idols

v. 17-19 God's encouragement to Jeremiah because of opposition he would face

17 Therefore prepare yourself and arise, And speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, Lest I dismay you before them.

v. 17 (KJV) "Thou therefore gird up thy loins and arise"—an ancient expression to get ready for service



People wore long robes and had to lift them up and tuck them under a belt in order to work or run or fight (Exodus 12: 11)

God tells Jeremiah not to be afraid of those who would mock, persecute or try to destroy him because of the warning message he would deliver

18 For behold, I have made you this day A fortified city and an iron pillar, And bronze walls against the whole land—  
Against the kings of Judah, Against its princes, Against its priests, And against the people of the land.

19 They will fight against you, But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you,” says the Lord, “to deliver you.”

v. 18 “A fortified city and an iron pillar, bronze walls”—military metaphors to assure Jeremiah that God would be with him

v. 19 All of these people mentioned in verse 18, kings, princes, priests and the people, would be against Jeremiah...but God said “I am with you”

## Lessons

Jeremiah was delivering God's message to Judah/Jerusalem of mercy and deliverance—if the people would repent

- God is merciful to us upon repentance

God told Jeremiah He would be with him and not to worry about his age or ability

- God calls and works with young people

God told Jeremiah the people would be against him as he preached...but God would be with him

- God is with us, and with the Church as we preach the gospel message, in spite of opposition we face