



To Pluck and to Plant (Jeremiah 1:1-12)

The Unheeded God (Jeremiah 7:1-29)

Fire in the Bones (Jeremiah 20:1-18)

The Ingathering (Jeremiah 23:1-8)

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Seeking great things for yourself? (Jeremiah 45:1-5)

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Background to the Book of Jeremiah¹

Israel and Judah at the Time of Jeremiah c. 597 B.C.

Jeremiah had a difficult life. His messages of repentance delivered at the temple were not well received (7:1–8:3; 26:1–11). His hometown plotted against him (11:18–23), and he endured much persecution in the pursuit of his ministry (20:1–6; 37:11–38:13; 43:1–7). At God's command he never married (16:1–4). A faithful preacher, he apparently had only two converts: Baruch, his scribe (32:12; 36:1–4; 45:1–5), and Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch who served the king (38:7–13; 39:15–18). These are the only two mentioned in the entire book who respond favourably to Jeremiah's preaching. Though the book does not reveal the time or place of Jeremiah's death, he presumably died in Egypt, where he had been taken by his countrymen against his will after the fall of Jerusalem (43:1–7).

Many authors have called Jeremiah the “weeping prophet.” While he does occasionally weep for Israel's condition (8:18–9:3; 13:15–17), and this depth of concern speaks well of him, this emphasis on his weeping may mislead readers regarding his toughness. Jeremiah was a determined, dedicated, longsuffering, and visionary follower of God. His courage and stamina serve as examples to even the most faithful of all God's embattled servants. The apostle Paul certainly viewed his own ministry as being like Jeremiah's (see 2 Corinthians 3). Thus, Jeremiah's weeping hardly summarizes his character. He could perhaps more accurately be called “the persevering prophet.”

Part of his perseverance was in the composition of the book that bears his name. It was not easy to remain invested in the production of what is now called the book of Jeremiah, for there were various reasons he could have given up the process. That Jeremiah and Baruch remained

committed to composing the book is a testament to their faith, as well as to the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

The book of Jeremiah is set during the politically tumultuous times following the fall of the Assyrians and the rise of the Babylonians. Jeremiah witnessed multiple deportations of Judeans to Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Though the precise boundaries of Judea and the surrounding regions during this period are difficult to ascertain, they likely resembled those that previously existed under Assyrian rule, with the exception that Edom (Idumea) had now migrated to the area formerly belonging to southern Judah.

History of Salvation Summary

Jeremiah was called to speak to the people of Jerusalem during a revival under King Josiah and continued to speak to them during that city's final fall to the Babylonians. His task was to hammer home the message that Jerusalem's fall was not due to any lack on God's part but was due entirely to Judah's unfaithfulness toward God, specifically by listening to false prophets rather than true ones (with Deut. 18:15–22 in the background). Even this horrifying disaster, however, was not the end: Jeremiah foretold a return from exile, an everlasting covenant, and a new covenant in which God's people would at last embrace the covenant in their hearts. Israel and Judah would be reunited and finally fulfil their calling to bring light to the world.

Literary Features

Jeremiah is an anthology or collection of writings drawn from an entire lifetime of prophetic ministry. The narrative sections scattered throughout the book are loosely structured around the main events of Jeremiah's life in ministry, which themselves were shaped by Judah's decline, fall, and exile in Babylon. But most of the material in the book

¹ This section taken from the ESV Study Bible notes on Jeremiah

is prophetic, much of it in the form of poetry. This material does not always follow a historical sequence; the logic of its arrangement is sometimes topical rather than chronological.

It may be helpful to think of the book of Jeremiah as a notebook or scrapbook of things written by the prophet about his ministry. Jeremiah includes enough “news clippings” to piece together the story of his life, but just as important are the prophetic poems he wrote to address the spiritual needs of his generation and to express the emotions of his own suffering soul. The list of subgenres shows how diverse the anthology is: call narrative, covenant lawsuit, jeremiad (a long recitation of mournful complaints), doom poem, satire, sermon, oracle of judgment, oracle of salvation, memoir, lament or complaint, soliloquy, prophetic object lesson, predictive prophecy, messianic prophecy, epistle, prayer, royal audience, rescue narrative, murder story, and judgment narrative.

The two main unifying elements in the book are the person of Jeremiah himself and the city that he loved, Jerusalem. Reading the book of Jeremiah, one watches the prophet in action, following the broad contours of his biography in the years leading up to and following the cataclysmic fall of Jerusalem (to trace the prophet's story line, see esp. chs. 1, 4, 7, 11–13, 18–20, 24–29, 32, 34–43). At the same time, one sees through windows into the prophet's soul and witnesses the grief that he suffered in watching the people he loved persist in sin and finally fall under the judgment of God. The many minor characters in the book—especially the rebellious kings, lying prophets, and unruly priests who constantly oppose the prophet's ministry, as well as the handful of his faithful supporters—are all seen in relationship to Jeremiah. Viewed as a story, the book of Jeremiah has a unifying plot conflict: will God's people listen to God's warnings and repent of their sin, or will they reject the message of God's prophet and be destroyed? The city of Jerusalem also has a strong unifying presence in the book.



The Babylonian Empire – and the movement of God’s people at the time of the exile²

² Taken from the ESV Study Bible maps and charts on Jeremiah

To Pluck and to Plant (Jeremiah 1:1-12)

The Problem (vv.1-3)

The Solution (vv.4-12)

How does this work for me here and now?

To Pluck and to Plant – Jeremiah 1:1-12 (Study)

Read Jeremiah 1:1-12

What is the problem in 1:1-3? See 22:13-17 for details.

For Josiah, see 22:15-16

Josiah used his kingship for justice

For Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, see 22:12-14, 17

Jehoiakim and Zedekiah used their kingship for gaining wealth through the oppression of the poor and needy.

The exile is coming – the low point of the Old Testament

What does 1:4-8 say about the call of Jeremiah?

Before he was born, he was earmarked to be a prophet (v.12)

His role is not dependant on his age or abilities.

He needs to do what God commands him to do

God's Word comforts Jeremiah – gives him strength

Jeremiah 1:9-10 can be seen as the key to the whole book of Jeremiah.

What does it say, and what are the results?

God's words in Jeremiah's mouth. Delegated authority over nations and kingdoms (not as a king, but as a mouthpiece. This authority is:

- to pluck, break down, destroy and overthrow
- to build and to plant

How is 1:9-10 similar / different from the message of the New Testament gospel?

Similar: God's Word in our mouth (we are His mouthpieces), judgement and salvation

Different: God's Word in Jeremiah's mouth (direct revelation); God's Word in the Bible written down for us. The NT gospel is not about breaking and building nations and kingdoms, but individuals. We have refuge from the storm in Jesus.

What's the go with the almond branch in verses 11-12? (see Isaiah 55:10-11)

Almond in Hebrew sounds like "watching" – God is watching over His Word to perform it. God's Word won't return to Him in vain – God's Word will do its work.

Do we trust this is true? Not just in theory, but in practice? In our quiet times, our CG's, our evangelistic efforts?

2 Cor 5:16-21 is a call on the church to herald the truth of God's judgement and grace like Jeremiah. How might we do this (concrete examples!)?

Verse 17 – new identity / beginning – God's Word can change anyone (there is no-one who is too hard to the gospel). Who have we struck off from our evangelistic / B.A.M. efforts because they're too hard? We are a new creation – are you living like it?

It is God who is in the work of reconciling people – because of the finished work of Jesus. Are you praying for your non-Christian contacts?

How are we going??

Love for the lost, boldness, prayerfulness etc

The Unheeded God (Jeremiah 7:1-29)

The unheeded God

The Temple Talisman (vv.1-4)

The self-destroyed people

The Broken Commandments (vv.5-11)

So what?

The Unheeded God – Jeremiah 7:1-29 (Study)

Read Jeremiah 7:1-29

What were God's people doing which made Him so angry?

vv.1-4

The loved the temple, but not the God who made it holy (liked the packaging, but not the gift).

vv.5-11

Ten Commandments broken – numbers 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9.

vv.17-18

Idolatry

vv.23-28

Stiff necked – refusing to listen to God and follow His commands

What is God's response? And what do you think/feel about it?

vv.12-15

Their beloved temple will be destroyed – just like at Shiloh

v.16

Do not pray for them – for I will not hear

vv.29

“God has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath”

How can we today worship with our mouths but deny God with our actions?

Sunday Christian – go to church, sing the songs, go to CG's, do the studies, pray the prayers – but not be growing in holiness and Christian character.

How does Jeremiah 7:1-29 illustrate Jesus' warning in Luke 8:18? What should our response/s be?

Because it is necessary for Jesus' followers to be light bearers, He commands them to see that they hear correctly (not like those in Jeremiah 7), that they listen carefully to His Word with full attention and steadfast conviction. Those who listen to God with a believing and obedient heart will be given a deeper and more intensive insight into the spiritual life and into His Word; the indifferent and disobedient ones will lose even the little measure of spiritual knowledge and joy of life they possess. Their hearts and lives will become darker and poorer.

How are we going??

Fire in the Bones (Jeremiah 20:1-18)

Jeremiah's battles without (vv.1-6)

Jeremiah's battles within (vv.7-18)

Implications for us today

Fire in the Bones – Jeremiah 20:1-18 (Study)

In this study, try to enter into the emotion of Jeremiah – to feel what he felt. *Read Jeremiah 20:1-18*

What are Jeremiah's struggles in vv.1-2?

Beaten, put in stocks – sounds simple, but would've been horrific

How does he respond (vv.3-6)? How would you respond?

He says to Pashur: change of name → terror on every side (terror to you, and terror to your friends; his friends will be killed by the sword; Judah will go into exile. All their treasures will be taken and he will die in a foreign place.

As we saw in Jer 1:6, Jeremiah was at first apprehensive about his task as a prophet of God. What does 20:7-18 tell us about how he felt about:

God

Deceived him (v.60, stronger than Jeremiah (v.6), with Jeremiah as a dread warrior (v.11), tests the righteous (v12), sees the heart and mind (v12), delivers the life of the needy (v13)

His task

Word of the LORD has become a reproach and derision (v.8) Jeremiah doesn't want to speak, but can't hold the Word in (v9)

His close friends (v.10)

They call for Terror on Every side of Jeremiah; they denounce him, watch for his fall, deceive him, try to overcome him, and take vengeance on him.

His life

A laughing stock (v6); hates his very existence (wished he was never born)

What is your emotional response to the above?

Relationally horrendous (close friends want to destroy him)

Emotionally and mentally depressing

His role – so hard

As we saw in Study 1, the church is to herald the truth of God's judgement and grace to the world – but it's a hard task as we too are surrounded by negative pressures. What are they and how have they affected your gospel proclamation?

Lots of things: mostly, the fear of man → being seen as intolerant, Bible basher / Fundies; fearing persecution, relational breakdown / loneliness, Satan's temptations etc.

How does Acts 5:27-29 help us to understand and continue speaking out God's Word to the world?

People don't want to hear the message of the gospel

But we must obey God not man – as Christians, we shouldn't have a choice in the matter.

This should give us confidence – it can be done (amidst greater pressure than we face).

How are we going??

The Ingathering (Jeremiah 23:1-8)

Scattered and skittled (vv.1-2)

Gathered and grown (vv.3-4)

Righteous reign (vv.5-6)

A new Exodus (vv.7-8)

Luke 15

So what?

The Ingathering – Jeremiah 23:1-8 (Study)

Read Jeremiah 23:1-8

How did Judah's leaders (shepherds) fail God's people?

v.1 - Destroyed and scattered (not their sheep) but God's sheep in God's pasture (land). V.2 – Scattered and driven them away (a deliberate action); not attended them – their needs not met.

How does God respond?

v.2 - To the shepherds (Judah's leaders)

(v.1 = Woe!). They didn't attend to God's sheep, God **will** attend to them (for their evil deeds)

vv.3-4 - To the sheep (God's people)

Gather the remnant from exile → bring them back to their fold, be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28 language – a new beginning).

God will give them new shepherds – who actually care for them; no more fear or dismay, and none missing.

In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God promised that King David would have someone from his line be king forever. Here, 350-400 years later in Jer 23:5, we see a branch from David's line. What will this king be like? What will He do?

Righteous

He will reign as King – wisely and executing justice and righteousness

He will save Judah, and Israel will rest securely.

Why would vv.7-8 have been so important to the people of Judah when God spoke this message through Jeremiah?

A New Exodus – a new start, no more slavery – in their old land. The exile was the lowest point in the Old Testament; this return from exile will be the new high point.

What great Exodus do we look back to and remember? What enemies have we been delivered from?

Our enemies in bold:

Rom 3:23-24 – **we** are our own enemies (fall short of the glory of God)

Rom 8:23 (Eph 4:30) – redemption of our **bodies** / day of redemption (when Jesus comes back)

Col 1:14 (Eph 1:7) – Forgiveness of **sins** / **transgressions**

Galatians 3:13 – redeemed from the **curse** of the law.

Read the following passages and reflect on what it means to have God / Jesus as our Shepherd-King-Saviour today:

Psalm 23

We won't want, receive rest (v.2), guidance (v.3), God's presence (v.4), provision (v.5), goodness and mercy to follow (v.6), dwell in the house of the LORD forever (v.6)

Luke 15:3-7

Jesus doesn't want to lose one of his sheep – and when he 'finds them', he rejoices and throws a big party in heaven!

John 10:11-18

Jesus is the Good Shepherd (v.11)– He knows us – we are His; we know Him (v.14). We have one Shepherd – we follow only one person → the Lord Jesus.

A Fresh Start (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

1) The *why* of the new covenant (vv.31-32)

'Adam' and Sin

- 1) Pre-Fall – able to sin
- 2) Post-Fall – not able to not sin
- 3) Post-Regeneration – able to not sin
- 4) Perfection – not able to sin

2) The *who* of the new covenant (v.33a)

3) The *how* of the new covenant (vv.33b-34)

Inner change

Forgiveness

So what?

A Fresh Start – Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Study)

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 10:11-25

What is a covenant, and why does God promise a new covenant to His people in Jeremiah 31:31-32?

A covenant is an agreement that binds two (or more) parties to each other in a permanent defined relationship, with specific promises, claims and obligations on both sides (e.g. marriage). The covenant in the Bible is summarised as “I will be your God, and you will be my people:.

Why a new covenant? See verse 32 – “not like the covenant... my covenant they broke”.

What four features of the new covenant are set forth in 31:33-34?

1. (cf. Ex 31:18) Put my Law within them – write it on their hearts (not on stone tablets like in the old covenant)
2. I will be their God and they will be my people – our very identity is wrapped up in our relationship with God
3. (cf. Ex 21:19) They will all know God personally – not scared of God and His Word
4. Forgiven sins / remember sins no more

In Luke 19:20, Jesus speaks of the new covenant. How is this new covenant brought into effect, and how are we to remember it?

Jesus’ sacrificial death – just like the Passover when God’s judgement passed over His people when the lamb was sacrificed...

Communion

According to Hebrews 10:11-8, why is the new covenant better than the old covenant? List all of the privileges we have in Christ.

The old covenant could never deal with our sins.

The new covenant is a once for all sacrifice that perfects the recipients; there is to be no more offerings for sin (nothing we can do to pay them off); our salvation is finished, and we certainly don’t need a human priest to do anything for us.

Hebrews 10:19-25 applies the privileges of the new covenant, and calls Christians to respond. How are we to respond? (concrete examples!)

V22 – Prayerful closeness with God

V23 – hold fast to our confession of hope without wavering

V24 – Stir up one another to love and good deeds; meet together, encourage one another.

How are we going??

Seeking great things for yourself? (Jeremiah 45:1-5)

Seeking great things for yourself? (v.5)

A word to Baruch (vv.1-5)

“I will give you your life” (v.5)

Petty self-pity (v.3)

So what?

God’s coming judgement (vv.4-5)

Seeking great things for yourself? – Jeremiah 45:1-5 (Study)

Read Jeremiah 45:1-5

Baruch was the son of a princely house. His brother Seraiah held an important office under the king (see 51:59), and he himself probably had ambitions (45:5). His work for Jeremiah would reveal the doom of the city and the kingdom of Judah (see ch. 52). What was Baruch's reaction to this in 45:1ff?

Woe is me! Self-pity – God has given him pain, and then on top of the pain, God has given him sorrow. He's tired and can't find rest and replenishment. He's at the end of his tether.

What was God's message to him, and what can we learn from it for ourselves?

God is in the process of not just making it hard on Baruch, but the whole land.

This fallen world will affect all people – God's people and us. To live in reality.

And in the midst of judgement, God questions Baruch's desire for peace and prosperity. Why should Baruch have it easy as a messenger of God, when the message is horrific.

Was Baruch's distress greater than the Lord's in having to deal with His own people in such a way (v.4)?

Remember, these people are those whom God has chosen, steadfastly loved, bound Himself to for their own good, was long-suffering in their rebellion etc. And now He's going to destroy many of them. The suffering that Baruch is nothing in comparison to the horrid work that God is doing for the sake of justice.

As Christians, we are servants of the Lord Jesus and his cause. Sometimes we forget this and seek our own petty ambitions instead of God's great ones. How can we be ambitious for God's kingdom and priorities, especially in the face of His coming judgement? Have a read of 2 Peter 3 for more on this.

Ambition means a strong desire for something. 2 Peter 3 tells us we should have a strong desire for:

Helping people repent → God doesn't want people to perish, but all to come to repentance (v.9). Our ambition is to proclaim the gospel near and far, so that people can heed God's call and repent!

We are to love lives of holiness and godliness (v.11, 14)

Waiting for and hastening the day of Jesus' return – by proclaiming the gospel so that all of God's elect are saved (v.12).

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (v.188 → we are to grow in knowledge, but also in receiving and giving undeserved favour.

How are we going??