



## Jeremiah Introduction (1:1-3)

### A. Why is this book so unloved?

Jeremiah is a major prophet in the Old Testament with a powerful message, relevant particularly to our day. But it is relatively unloved and unread. Why?

1. Too long? 52 chapters long! (Isaiah is 66 chapters. Ezekiel is 48 chapters.) The message contains over 40 years of Jeremiah's prophetic message.
2. Too hard? The book is not in chronological order nor in topical order, and it is difficult to follow. So, is it an arbitrary collection of Jeremiah's prophecies? No, there is 'order' and we will see it as we study it closely. Jeremiah himself is most probably responsible for the final compilation.
3. Too depressing? Some of the most powerful prophecies of hope and restoration are uttered by Jeremiah, but they are easily overlooked because they are imbedded between the hard words of discipline and judgement. Jeremiah is nicknamed 'the weeping prophet' because his writings, more than any other prophetic books in the Bible, reveal the *human side of the prophet* - his broken heart, suffering and inner struggles. The book is also packed with God's self-revelation, in particular His intense emotions, the tension within God's heart between anger and mercy, frustration, and love towards His people. Through Jeremiah, we can look into the depth of God's feelings and His commitment towards us.

### B. Why study Jeremiah?

The prophetic book of Jeremiah is not 'milk'. It takes a strong stomach to stay with the book and to digest its message. The message of Jeremiah will push us and shake us hard. Jeremiah was not only a prophet sent to Israel, but also to the nations. So, Jeremiah's prophecies to Israel and to the nations, are extremely timely for us. The church needs to hear God's voice to the nations through Jeremiah in this urgent prophetic hour, particularly in the USA. And Australia's turn is also coming soon.

1. To know God's ways - We need to know how God acts in history. Moses prayed for this understanding, *'Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favour in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favour in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people (Exo 33:13).'* But the only history we have with *authoritative divine commentary* is the history of Israel. (The church has two thousand years of natural history, but without the divine commentary.) Jeremiah ministered during one of the darkest periods of Israel's history, and what God spoke and how God dealt with Israel and the nations, provide insight into the ways of God with us. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
2. To know God's emotions - Jeremiah was a sensitive young man who was called upon to speak very hard word to disobedient Israel. With unparalleled prophetic poetry, Jeremiah lays bare the broken heart of God as well as the anguish of his own heart. Jesus once asked His disciples, *'Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, am?'* Some said, *'John the Baptist [powerful preacher]'*, some said *'Elijah [miracle worker]'*, and others said, *'Jeremiah [why?]'*. (C.f. Matt 16:16) Why Jeremiah? Because Jesus the Messiah came as the suffering servant of the Lord, as foretold by the prophets of Israel. Jesus' humanity and His heart paralleled Jeremiah most closely among all the prophets.

The modern Christian might find Jeremiah melodramatic and melancholic with too much 'doom and gloom'. But Jeremiah was the true prophet of God in the midst many false prophets who led Judah astray. So, if the church cannot stomach the message of Jeremiah and the God of Jeremiah, neither will we be able to stomach the message in the New Testament prophetic book of Revelations.

Are we ok to hear God's straight talk?

3. To receive the 'Burden of the Lord' - Jeremiah speaks of God's word as sweet and delightful at reception, but later the word of the Lord turned bitter in his stomach in the process of digesting it. The word became in Jeremiah like burning fire consuming the chaff, and a sledgehammer smashing the rock of resistance. The word of the Lord burning in him separated him from social circles and the partying crowd. Jeremiah sat alone because the anguish in the heart of God became his own anguish. He received 'the burden of the Lord'.

Jeremiah ministered out of the 'anguished heart of God' for over 40 years. He did not have a personal vision or ministry ambition like many false prophets of his day. Jeremiah severely condemned their lack of the burden from the Lord, and their words which were like the worthless chaff blown around by the wind. The divine burden is not an easy yoke to carry, but it is an essential requirement of the true prophetic ministry. Ezekiel and John too ate the word of God. It was sweet in their mouth, but bitter in their stomach, i.e. it generated the holy burden in them. This divine mandate is upon the church in the last days, especially upon intercessors and prophetic ministers.

Are you willing to receive the burden of the Lord in such a way that it will cost you something, as we dig into the prophecies of Jeremiah? When Jesus cleansed the temple, He displayed such an unusually intense emotion that the disciples remembered Psalm 69, *'Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers. And an alien to my mother's children; Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.'* (C.f. Ps 69:7-9)

Apostle Paul said, *'Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...'* (2 Cor 6:11). The modern church conspicuously lacks the fear of God because we stopped beholding both the 'goodness' and the 'severity' of the Lord, nor do we take time to hear His anguished heart. In Jeremiah we can feel God's emotions: His joys, passionate love, and hope, as well as His anger, disgust, and heartbreak.

Let the study of Jeremiah restore to the church the holy fear of the Lord once again.

## C. Historical Background

*'...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.'* (Jer 1:3)

The northern kingdom of Israel was already destroyed by Assyria in 722BC, following Amos' warning that went unheeded. The southern kingdom of Judah also largely failed to heed Isaiah and Micah's warnings. Jeremiah began his ministry in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC in Judah and through the exile of Jerusalem in 586BC.

1. Jeremiah lived during the reign of the last seven kings of Judah, and his ministry took place during the reign of the last five kings, from Josiah through to Zedekiah.
  - i. Manasseh (709-643BC) was an evil king who had slain Isaiah in two inside a hollow of a tree! Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king and reigned for 55 years (2 King 21:1). He sacrificed his children to the devil and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood.
  - ii. Amon (642-640BC) replaced Manasseh only to reign 2 short years. He was assassinated by his people (2 Kings 21:23), and was replaced by Josiah. Evil kings generally had a short reign.
  - iii. Josiah (640-609 BC) became king when he was only 8 years old. Soon after, the book of the law, most likely Deuteronomy, was found in the dusty cupboard in the temple. And he understood for the first time that Judah was under God's curse according to His law. He immediately commenced a sweeping national reform. (2 Kings 23:1-25) That year Israel celebrated the greatest Passover ever. Josiah was only 26.

Interestingly Jeremiah doesn't mention Josiah's reform at all though they were both born during Manasseh's reign, about 3 years apart. The extensive reform in Judah came too late, and it could not alter the course of the nation. Perhaps Jeremiah saw that the external reform coming from top-down doesn't transform people's heart. Then the national tragedy struck in 609BC when Josiah's ill-advised battle with the Egyptians at Megiddo cut short his life.

Yet, Jeremiah continued to carry the flickering hope throughout his prophecies. In Ch 18 Jeremiah was sent to the potter's field by the Lord, where the potter was trying to shape a beautiful vase. But the clay would not run well in the potter's hands, so the potter put it back into a lump and remade it into a thick crude pot instead. What was the lesson for Jeremiah? God the potter wanted to make a vessel of mercy out of Israel, but Israel wouldn't cooperate with God, so He had to make Israel a vessel of judgement instead.

Then in Ch 19, an ugly clay pot was baked and became hard, and Jeremiah was told to take the pot and break it in front of the elders of Judah, and throw the pieces into the valley of Hinnom, the rubbish tip in the city. Jesus used this place in his illustration for hell, i.e. 'Gehenna'. The lesson here is, if we persist in hardening our hearts, eventually we will reach a point of no return, where we can no longer be worked on by God. Whether we become the vessel of His glory or the vessel of His judgement is our choice. (C.f. 2 Tim 2:20-21)

The next four kings after Josiah were disappointingly weak and wicked. The last king, Zedekiah's ending was a sad tragedy.

- iv. Jehoahaz (609 BC) ruled only for 3 months, and he was carried off to Egypt as a captive where he died.
- v. Jehoiakim [Eliakim] (609-598 BC) was Jehoahaz' older brother and reigned for 11 years. He was a weak king who shifted his allegiance back and forth between Egypt and Babylon. Jeremiah warned him not to cross the Babylonians, but he didn't listen. Instead, he burned Jeremiah's prophecy and threw Jeremiah into prison (Ch 36). Soon after, Jehoiakim was deposed and was carried off to Babylon as a prisoner, and he died there. (2 Ch 36:3).
- vi. Jehoiachin [Jeconiah or Coniah] (598-597 BC) was Jehoiakim's son. He succeeded his father, only to last 3 months. Jeremiah prophesied that none of his descendants would sit on the throne (22:30). Within 3 months of his reign, Jehoiachin and the queen mother were carried off to Babylon in the second wave of deportation. He died there, but with favour in his last days.
- vii. Zedekiah (597-586 BC) was the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Josiah, and he ruled Judah for 11 years. Like his older brother Jehoiakim, he was a weak king and was a 'political flip flop' between Babylon and Egypt. Under pressure from Judean nationalists, he formed a new alliance with Egypt (Ch 37-38). The Babylonians came to attack and laid siege which lasted 18 months. The city was broken through in 586 BC, and Zedekiah was caught running away on the plains of Jordan. He was taken to Riblah in Syria. His two sons were killed, and his eyes were gouged out. He was taken captive to Babylon where he died as a prisoner.

## 2. Jeremiah Overview

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry spanned from the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah's reign (627 BC) to the 11<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah's (586BC) (Jer 1:2-3). Jeremiah also prophesied after the fall of Jerusalem (C.f. Jer 40-44).

During Jeremiah's time, three decisive battles were fought that involved Judah.

- I. Battle of Megiddo (Egypt & Judah - Josiah died). (609 BC)
- II. Battle of Carchemish (Babylon & Egypt - Babylon won). (605 BC)
- III. Battle of Jerusalem (Babylon & Judah - Babylon won). (586 BC)

During this time Judah was tossed back and forth between major superpowers. And Judah backed the wrong power each time, so she was swallowed up in the 'boiling cauldron'. Jeremiah kept prophesying to Judah, *'You will never become what you are called to be unless you turn to God. All the political manoeuvring will not profit you one bit. The only hope is to turn to God wholeheartedly.'*

He endured the pain of watching his nation going down and down. He was the lone voice warning the people amid Judah's many false prophets. Jeremiah was rejected and persecuted and was labelled a 'traitor'. Even Jeremiah's own family wanted to kill him. But Jeremiah discovers the secret of how he could stand with God.

### 3. Jeremiah Timeline

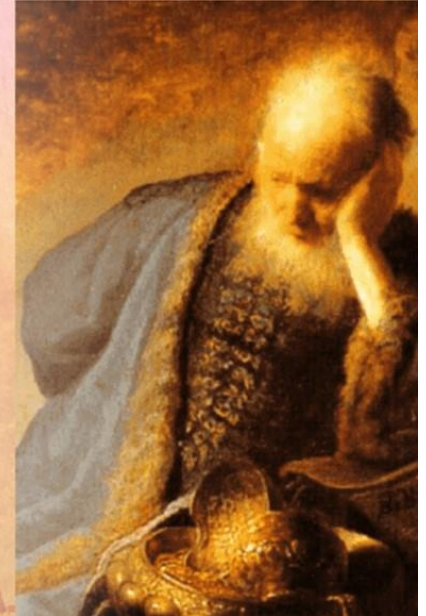
<b>Year</b>	<b>Key Events</b>	<b>References</b>
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640	Josiah becomes a king at age 8	2 Chr 34:1
628	Josiah begins reform	2 Chr 34:3
627	Jeremiah called into ministry	Jer 1:2
622	The book of the law discovered in the temple	2 Chr 34:8
609	Josiah killed in Battle in Megiddo	2 Chr 35:20ff
	Jehoahaz reigns for 3 months	2 Chr 36:1-3
	Jehoiakim became king of Judah by Necho	2 Chr 36:4
605	Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egyptians at Carchemish	Jer 46:2
	First deportation to Babylon	Dan 1
604	Jehoiakim burns Jeremiah's scroll	Jer 36
598	Jehoiakim deposed and dies	2 Chr 36:5ff
	Jehoiachin reigns for 3 months	2 Kgs 24:8
597	2 <sup>nd</sup> deportation to Babylon (Jehoiachin carried off to Babylon)	2 Kings 24:12-17
	Zedekiah made king over Judah	
588	Jerusalem besieged for Zedekiah's treachery	Jer 52:3-4
586	Fall of Jerusalem	Jer 39
	Gedaliah appointed governor of Judah	Jer 40:5-6
	Gedaliah assassinated by Ishmael	Jer 41:2
	Jeremiah kidnapped and taken to Egypt	Jer 42-43
581	3 <sup>rd</sup> deportation to Babylon	Jer 52:30

# JEREMIAH

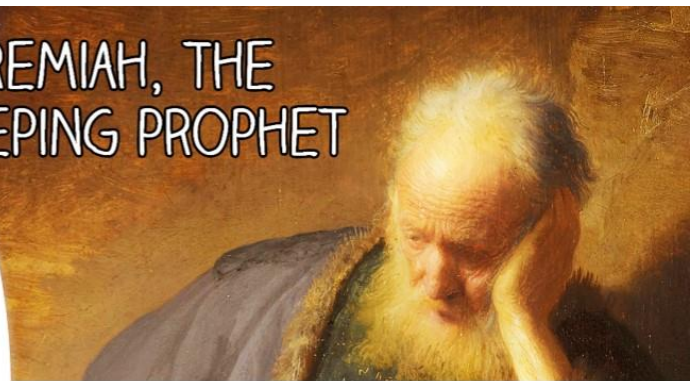
The “Weeping” Prophet

## Jeremiah Called to Be a Priest (1:1-3)

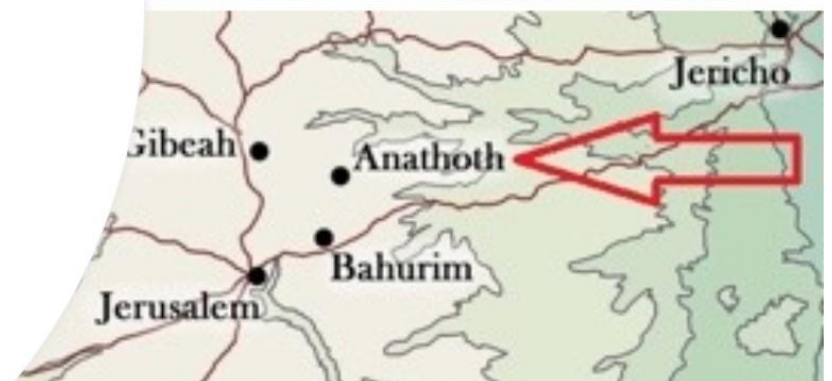
**1** The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, **2** to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. **3** It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, 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.



JEREMIAH, THE  
“WEEPING” PROPHET



1. *Why is this book so unloved?*
2. *Why study Jeremiah?*
3. *Historical Background*
4. *Man*
5. *Message*
6. *Structure*



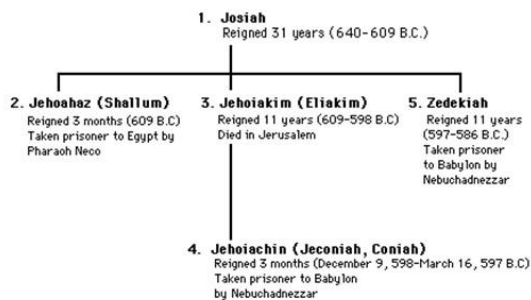


## Historical Background

'In the days of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah.'

(BKC [OT] p. 584)

### The Last Five Kings of Judah



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# JEREMIAH, THE WEEPING PROPHET

[Prologue – Jeremiah's Personal Call \(1:1-19\)](#)

[The Sinning nation \(2-45\)](#)

627-605 BC: [Immediate Retribution \(2-20\)](#)

*[Mostly Poetry] – communicating God's conflicted emotion*

[Babylon destroys Assyria (612BC) & Babylon defeats Egypt (605BC)]

605-585 BC: [Ultimate Restoration \(21-45\)](#)

*[Mostly Prose] – longer term view of ultimate restoration*

Babylon deports Judah

[The Surrounding nations \(46-51\)](#)

Judgement on Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Elam, and Babylon.

[Epilogue – national catastrophe \(52\)](#)

It records the dreadful national catastrophe that was breaking on Jerusalem.