

A Survey of the Old Testament
Prophetic Books
by Pastor Richard H. Jones

#4 "Jeremiah"

I. COMMENTS ON THE PROPHET

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest, who lived at Anathoth four or five miles northeast of Jerusalem. That his father is the Hilkiah of II Kings 22:8 is without support. Anathoth was however the city where Abiathar retired after Adonijah's rebellion (I Kings 2:26).

Jeremiah was young when God called him to be a prophet (Jer. 1:6) and he received persecution not only from fellow-townsmen (Jer. 11:21) but also from his own family (Jer. 12:6).

Jeremiah's name means "exalted of Jehovah", and he is characterized as a prophet with a broken heart, who loved his people, but not their sins and because of his warnings and denouncements was misunderstood and mistreated.

II. CONTENTS OF HIS PROPHECY

Under Josiah, Jeremiah no doubt assisted in the reforms and we know he lamented Josiah's death (II Chron. 35:25).

Under Jehoiakim, he prophesied that the only way of safety was through submission to the Chaldeans. This almost resulted in his death. In Jehoiakim's 4th year, Jeremiah dictated to Baruch, his scribe, prophesies which the King destroyed. These were rewritten Jer. 36:22.

Under Jehoiachin, Jeremiah prophesied further warnings and sent letters to those taken captive that God would restore them (Jer. 29-31).

Under Zedekiah, Jeremiah was imprisoned and barely escaped death (Jer. 37:12-38:13).

Under Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah was freed to follow his advice (Jer. 39:11,12). When a group of conspirators killed Gedaliah and took him to Egypt, Jeremiah continued to prophesy to God's people (Jer. 44).

Jeremiah was called upon by the Lord to prophesy judgment upon his people. Because of their impenitence, God was going to give them over to a Gentile nation. Also as a part of God's message, Jeremiah pleaded for God's people to submit to the Chaldeans to avoid unnecessary sufferings because judgment was inevitable. For this, Jeremiah was reproached as treacherous and unpatriotic.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERIOD

Three powerful nations are prominent in the background of Jeremiah's prophecy. A year after Jeremiah's call Nebopolassar rebelled against Assyria in 626 B.C. and formed the Neo-Babylonian power. In 612 B.C. the Medes, Babylonians and Scythians destroyed Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. About the same time, to the south, Egypt emerged as a third power. In 609 Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt went up to aid Assyria against Babylon. In this campaign Josiah of Judah was killed (II Kings 23:29).

Josiah's sons Jehoahaz took his father's place, reigned 3 months, and was deposed by Necho (II Kings 23:29-33). Necho then set up another of Josiah's sons (Eliakim), changed his name to Jehoiakim, and made Judah vassal to Egypt (II Kings 23:35).

In 606 B.C. Necho warred against Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nebopolassar, King of Babylon. At the battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho and made Judah vassal to Babylon (II Kings 24:1; Jer. 46:2). This was the first deportation also of Judah to Babylon.

In 597 B.C. Jehoiakim died and his son Jehoiachin took his place. After 3 months, Nebuchadnezzar came to Palestine and took a second deportation to Babylon along with Jehoiakim who was imprisoned (II Kings 24:6,11,15; 25:27-30).

When Jehoiachin was dethroned, Nebuchadnezzar set up Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, and changed his name to Zedekiah. For 11 years Zedekiah was vassal to Babylon, but then rebelled in 586 B.C. which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the third and final deportation to Babylon.

After the fall of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar appointed a Jew named Gedaliah as governor to rule over the poor who were left in the land. Gedaliah's capital was Mizpah, 7 miles north of Jerusalem (II Kings 25:23). Jeremiah remained with the poor.

A conspiracy ended Gedaliah's rule as governor, then fled to Egypt and took Jeremiah with them. Tradition says Jeremiah fled to Babylon and died there.

Jeremiah had been called to prophesy in the 13th year of King Josiah (626 B.C.) He had supported his reforms (Jer. 11:1-8; 17:19-27). But these only served to slow down the idolatry and apostasy of the nation Judah. Jeremiah prophesied then through the successive reigns of Josiah, his son Jehoahaz, his son Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin, and Josiah's son Zedekiah.

From the 13th year of Josiah (Jer. 25:3) to the fall of Jerusalem is the 40 years period of Jeremiah's ministry and the historical accounts are listed in II Kings 22-25 and II Chron. 34-36.

IV. NOTABLE THINGS

- A. Note the appeals to backsliders in chapters 2 and 3.
- B. Note Jeremiah's experiences in prison (37:11-15; 38:1-28).
- C. Note the condition of men's heart (17:9,10).
- D. Note that Jeremiah's prophecy of captivity and restoration also predicts world-wide dispersion, regathering, judgment of nations and restoration of blessings which will be realized in the millennium.
- E. Note that Jeremiah has been called the "weeping prophet".
- F. Note the references to the new covenant (31).
- G. Note 24 chapters are given over to pleadings for repentance.
- H. Note the worship of the queen of heaven (7:17,18; 44:15-30) originated in Babylon. The Roman Catholic Church, with its Christianized paganism, has continued this worship in their Madonna making Mary the queen today. Any worship of this sort is of the devil no matter what the religious disguise.
- I. Note the attacks of critics over Matt. 27:9. We are asked to find this prophecy of "thirty pieces of silver" in his prophecy. Matt. says it was "spoken" by Jeremiah not written and Zechariah later wrote it (Zech. 11:12,13). Here is an example that we can have revelation without inspiration. (Note also II Cor. 12:4).

V. PERSONAL LESSONS

- A. God's call to serve may mean persecution from friends and family.
- B. God's servants can be obedient to His Word and deliver His message and that message be unheeded.
- C. God's servants can be misunderstood and mistreated when following the path of obedience.
- D. God's people, in a backslidden condition, take their spite out on God's servants when their sins are condemned.
- E. God's servants may find themselves alone, rejected, reproached, and the majority turned against them when they are right, burdened, tearful, and uncompromising.

- F. God's people can go astray with sinful practices to the point that no message, through the most heartbroken messenger, may reach them and only chastening will change or turn them.
- G. God's servants must cast themselves more and more upon God as the darkness of sinful days becomes darker.
- H. Standing for the Lord often produces enemies. A man without enemies or persecution is a man who hasn't taken a stand.

OUTLINE

I. GOD'S CALL OF REPENTANCE THROUGH JEREMIAH (1-24)

- A. Jeremiah's call and commission (1:1-2:19)
- B. Indicted over idolatry (2-6)
- C. Indicted concerning temple worship (7-10)
- D. Indicted concerning the covenant (11-13)
- E. Indicted over true worship (14-17)
- F. Instructed about the consequences (18-24)

II. GOD'S CHASTENING OF JUDAH FOR REBELLION (25-45)

- A. Prophecies of captivity and restoration (25-38)
- B. Fall of Jerusalem and captivity (39)
- C. Disposition of things after invasion (40-45)

III. GOD'S CONFOUNDING OF NATIONS AGAINST JUDAH (46-52)

- A. Judgment prophesied against Egypt (46)
- B. Judgment prophesied against the Philistines (47)

- C. Judgment prophesied against Moab (48)
- D. Judgment prophesied against Ammon, Edom and others (49)
- E. Judgment prophesied against Babylon (50-51)
- F. Summary of Judah's chastening (52)