

Jeremiah

Purpose: Judahites should realize that judgment is coming and salvation will only come through exile.

Outline: 1:1-19 – The Call of Jeremiah

2:1-25:38 – Book 1 of the oracles of Jeremiah

26:1-29:32 – Biographical interlude 1

30:1-31:40 – Book 2: The book of consolation

32:1-45:5 – Biographical interlude 2

46:1-51:64 – Book 3: Oracles against the nations

52:1-34 – Historical appendix: The fall of Jerusalem

Author: Jeremiah (except chapter 52) with biographical sections possibly by Baruch – his scribe.

Date: Jeremiah's prophetic ministry took place from 626 until after 586 B.C. (during the reigns of the last 5 kings of Judah)

Highlights:

Jeremiah is one of the few books of the OT to provide information about its writing. In 605 BC after Jeremiah had been prophesying for more than twenty years, God instructed him to record his prophecies in writing (36:1-3). Jeremiah employed a scribe to do the actual writing as he dictated the words (36:4). This scroll was read before the king who destroyed it, but a second copy was subsequently made (36:32).

There are 3 books within Jeremiah (chapters 1-25, 30-31, 46-51). Interspersed among these are 2 biographical sections (26-29, 32-45). Chapter 52 is a later addition, which is indicated as 51:64 report, "The words of Jeremiah end here."

Because of the great personal struggles reported in Jeremiah we learn more about his personality than that of any other prophet. His personal struggles and difficult message make him "the weeping prophet."

Jeremiah's call came at a very important time. Josiah had ascended to the throne as an 8 years old child (in 648 BC). When he reached the age of twenty (628 BC) he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of pagan worship after the book of the Law was found in the temple (2 Chronicles 34:3-7). Jeremiah's call came shortly after, in 627/6 BC, which was also the year of the death of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, the last great ruler of the Assyrian Empire. So, Jeremiah's ministry began the same year that Babylon became an independent state and began its conquest of Assyria, and then Judah.

The time of Jeremiah's call was both a time of hope, because of the spiritual reform in progress, and a time of danger, for a new enemy loomed on the horizon. As it turned out, hope was short-lived. Josiah's reforms died when Josiah died in battle.

Babylon king Nebuchadnezzar finally conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC, but determined that the city was politically unreformable; so the Judahites were taken into exile. Deportation was used politically to obliterate national and ethnic identities, the Lord planned to use it to preserve a remnant for himself. Judah had proven that it was spiritually unreformable, so exile was the only option.

There are 4 different types of oracles in Jeremiah.

Indictment Oracles are all in Book I, most heavily concentrated in chapters 5-9.

Judgment Oracles are more prevalent than any other. They are national in scope and mostly political in nature (e.g. exile, destruction, plunder). There is a close correspondence between these and the curses listed in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 for failure to keep the covenant (cf. Jeremiah 11:8)

Instruction oracles are very sparse in Jeremiah. The near absence of instruction is typical, because the people had the covenant and knew what God required of them; they just didn't do it.

Aftermath oracles are found primarily in the Book of Consolation and the sections around it (29-33).

There are three major categories of writing. Type A consists of prophetic oracles written in poetry. Type B comprises historical narratives about Jeremiah. Type C is the prose speeches of the book.

Temple sermon of Jeremiah (7:1-8:3)

Confessions of Jeremiah (Chapters 11-20)

The New Covenant (Chapter 31)