

JEREMIAH
THE WEeping PROPHEt
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A BRIEF OUTLINE AND COMMENTARY

No book in the Bible is more difficult to organize than the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah, known as the weeping prophet, wrote a book that has no discernible chronology or organization rationale. This is possibly because he wrote during a time of national, political, social, moral and religious upheaval. The scrolls were probably compiled by someone who had no idea of the order intended by Jeremiah. The result is a disjointed document.

God makes no mistakes, and we can be sure that the Book of Jeremiah appears in our Bible just as the Holy Spirit intended. The overall message is certain, even though individual chapters and specific portions may leave a precise context concealed. In any case, the central idea of Jeremiah is clear: Sin leads to destruction.

Jeremiah prophesied during the final forty years of Judah's history. He began his ministry in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (1:2) and ministered until the time of the fall of Jerusalem, and beyond. God chose Jeremiah to prophesy in a time of great national, religious and individual rebellion. It is no wonder that Jeremiah was a weeping prophet, for he watched as God's chosen people rejected the Lord and slid into desolation and eventual captivity. Jeremiah had a message of hope for the remnant that God would send back to the land; however, it is apparent from his sermons that he knew the collapse of Judah was on the horizon.

Jeremiah tried to quit preaching, as recorded in Jeremiah 20:9, but could not. He was born into a priestly family (1:1), called to be a prophet from his mother's womb (1:5), and later had his mission to be a prophet to the nations made very clear by the Lord (1:5).

Because the contents of Jeremiah have no organizational structure, it is difficult to outline. We can look at Jeremiah in one of two ways. First, note the contents of the book as it emerges in order of appearance.

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| • Call of Jeremiah | Chapter 1 |
| • Prophecies before the Fall of Jerusalem | Chapters 2 - 38 |
| • Fall of Jerusalem and Messages to Remnant | Chapters 39 - 44 |
| • Prophecies to Various Nations | Chapters 45 - 51 |
| • Fall of Jerusalem Repeated | Chapter 52 |

For us to understand Jeremiah, it is best to depart from the process we have used in examining each of the previous twenty-three books. Let's consider Jeremiah in a threefold division.

- **The Historical**

You will not see details of the historical period involved, but you will see listed the kings who ruled during Jeremiah's ministerial life and the dates that they served. Some historical information will appear in the comments regarding the pictures and prophecies that God gave to Jeremiah. This includes the time after the fall of Jerusalem and the death of the final king, Zedekiah.

- **2. The Pictorial**

Several of the pictures that God gave Jeremiah are listed with brief commentary.

- **3. The Prophetical**

Some of the prophecies the Lord delivered through Jeremiah are described below.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

I. (Historical) The Period of Jeremiah's Ministry (All dates are B.C.)

A. King Josiah	639 – 608
B. King Jehoahaz	608 (three months)
C. King Jehoiakim	608 - 597
D. King Jehoiachin	(three months)
E. King Zedekiah	597 - 586
F. After Fall of Jerusalem	586 and beyond

II. (Pictorial) The Pictures in Jeremiah's Ministry

A. The Almond Tree	1:10-12
B. The Boiling Pot	1:13-14
C. The Soap	2:22
D. The Heart Plow	4:3-4
E. The Potter	18 - 19
F. The Two Baskets of Figs	24:1-10
G. The Yoke	28

III. (Prophetical) The Prophecies during Jeremiah's Ministry

A. The Fall of Jerusalem	1:14-16; 4:5-9
B. The Destruction of the Temple	7:11-15
C. The Collapse of the Alliance with Egypt	37:5-10
D. The Seventy-Year Captivity of Judah	25:8-13
E. The Return to and Restoration of Jerusalem	27:19-22; 30:1-21
F. The Final Return to and Rebuilding of Israel	30:1-31:40
G. The Messiah Comes to Reign	23:5-6; 33:15-16

The Pictures in Jeremiah's Ministry

Jeremiah's preaching was filled with pictures, illustrations and visions. Because of this, his preaching is easy to understand and comprehend. We now look at a few of the pictures God gave Jeremiah to use in his prophetic ministry.

The Almond Tree

Chapter 1:10-12

Jeremiah's preaching had a note of urgency, which was a result of God's instruction to the prophet. The first picture or vision which the Lord revealed to Jeremiah was an almond tree. God spoke to Jeremiah in 1:12 using a play on the word "watching," which in Hebrew sounds very much like the word *almond*. The almond tree budded earlier than the other trees. God was telling Jeremiah that His judgment was going to BUD soon.

The Boiling Pot

Chapter 1:13-14

The second picture Jeremiah saw was a boiling pot. This pot, situated to the north, was shown being tilted toward the south. Try as you may, you can hardly think of anything more horrifying than having a pot of boiling liquid poured out upon you. God revealed to Jeremiah that this was going to happen to the entire nation of Judah.

Is it any wonder that Jeremiah was a flaming preacher who often wept as he delivered his message? We, too, might have a greater compassion for souls and a greater zeal in our witness, if we could plainly see a coming judgment from God. The theme of impending judgment is an almost forgotten topic in our day, but though we hide the subject beneath a sophisticated facade, we cannot deny the reality of a coming day of retribution for unforgivable sin.

The Soap

Chapter 2:22

The people of Judah tried to deny their guilt, so Jeremiah used the illustration of a people who seek to remove the stains of sin with an abundance of soap.

If you read the two preceding verses (2:20-21), you will note that Jeremiah uses the picture of a yoke in verse 20 and a choice vine in verse 21. God began to speak to Jeremiah in pictures, and this method became a masterful tool in the prophet's hand.

Jeremiah said that no amount of soap can remove the stains of sin and guilt. We could add that the only remedy that avails for sin is the blood; the blood of Christ which was shed upon the cross cleanses a person from sin. Jeremiah did not have the cross in mind when he wrote these words; however, he was certain that no human cleansing agent could remove the stains of sin.

The Heart Plow

Chapter 4:3-4

The Lord gave Jeremiah an illustration of a plow for the heart. Anyone who has ever tried to grow something in hard ground knows what a hopeless cause it is. In this illustration, the Lord is revealing how futile it is to grow spiritual seeds in a hardhearted person. The people were counseled to "break up the fallow [unplowed] ground."

The Potter

Chapters 18 - 19

No picture from the ministry of Jeremiah is as well-known as the potter's house. The Lord sent Jeremiah to the potter's house where he gave him a special message. In this picture, God is the potter and the Land of Israel is the marred vessel. God is destroying the marred vessel, taking the clay in hand and reshaping it into that which He meant it to be. In chapter 19 the picture continues as Jeremiah takes a clay jar and holds it up during a sermon. He announces the destruction of the land and then throws the jar down, shattering it into pieces. The Lord tells Jeremiah to declare, "Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof (verse 12)." Jeremiah not only saw his sermons as pictures - he preached them as such and physically demonstrated them.

The Two Baskets of Figs

Chapter 24:1-10

The Lord revealed to Jeremiah a vision of two baskets of figs sitting in front of the temple. One basket contained good figs, the other contained rotten figs. God told Jeremiah that the good figs were like those captives who had been taken to Babylon. The good figs represented people like Daniel and his friends, whom God promised to protect. The bad figs were the people left in Jerusalem, like King Zedekiah and the officials of the land. The bad figs represented those who would be destroyed by the judgment of God upon Judah.

The Yoke

Chapter 28

Jeremiah wore a yoke as an example of the bondage coming on the people. Hananiah prophesied that no yoke would come upon the people and took the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it in front of the people. Jeremiah went to him at the Lord's command and told him the yoke he had broken would be replaced with one of iron. Jeremiah prophesied that Hananiah would die because of his rebellion, and within two months he died as prophesied.

Jeremiah used many other lucid pictures to present God's truth:

- The Bride, chapters 2 and 3
- The Lion, 3:7
- A Woman in Labor, 4:31
- Dressing the Wound, 8:11
- The Scarecrow, 10:5
- The Linen Belt, 13:1-11
- Wine-skins, 13:12-14
- Tablets of the Heart, 17:1
- Fire in the Bones, 20:9
- Word of God like Fire and a Hammer, 23:29, et al.

The Prophecies during Jeremiah's Ministry

The Fall of Jerusalem

Chapter 1:14-16; 4:5-9

Jeremiah correctly prophesied the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. This may not sound very astounding; however, it is a remarkable prophecy when you consider that many others were predicting peace for Jerusalem (6:14).

The Destruction of the Temple

Chapter 7:11-15

Jeremiah made a bold and daring statement when he prophesied the destruction of the Temple. It is true that God gave him this message, but it is also true that nothing created more hatred toward Jeremiah than his saying that the Temple would be destroyed. It is interesting that the people loved the BUILDING OF THE LORD but had lost their love for the LORD OF THE BUILDING. The place in which we worship must never take precedence over the Person we worship.

The Collapse of the Alliance with Egypt

Chapter 37:5-10

Jeremiah shared God's message that Judah's alliance with Egypt would end in disaster. That was exactly what occurred.

The Seventy-Year Captivity of Judah

Chapter 25:8-13

This prophecy is remarkably correct. Jeremiah told the people that they would serve Babylon seventy years. They were taken captive and remained in Babylon seventy years, just as the prophet had predicted.

The Return To and Restoration of Jerusalem

Chapter 27:19-22; 30:1-21

Those who see Jeremiah only as a prophet of doom fail to recognize that he presented a message of deliverance, restoration and hope. He accurately prophesied the return of the Temple articles taken by Babylon. He also received word from the Lord that Jerusalem would be restored.

The Final Return to and Rebuilding of Israel

Chapters 30-31

This prophecy is post-tribulation in nature. The time is coming when the New Jerusalem will be established, and the saved Jewish remnant will dwell in the land along with God's children who will rule and reign with Him.

The Messiah Comes To Reign

Chapter 23:5-6; 33:15-16

The Branch is the Messiah who will bring forth (sprout or branch) new Life! Jeremiah prophesied amazingly that this Branch will secure righteousness for His people. He will be the King! The Branch revealed to Jeremiah is none other than Christ, Himself. Jeremiah got a glimpse of the Person of the Messiah.

Jeremiah was one of God's choice servants, but he only received a glimpse; believers today have grace, GREAT GRACE! Let us be thankful and serve Him faithfully.