

JEREMIAH

POLITICAL SITUATION

- 605 B.C.: Babylon defeats Egypt and becomes world power. Judah falls under Babylon this same year. Deports some of the royal family and the aristocracy and Daniel.
- 597 B.C.: Jehoiachin, Ezekiel and 10 000 deported. Zedekiah made king.
- 586 B.C.: Temple destroyed, only the poor left, Zedekiah taken but Jeremiah went free.

JOSIAH (639-609)

- Reforms in 628 and 622 BC but they were obviously not completely reforming since Jeremiah continues to prophesy.
- Still judgment will come because of all the evil that Manasseh did, but Josiah will not live to see it.

JEHOIAKIM (609-597)

- Jehoahaz' half-brother and Josiah's oldest son. Neco changed his name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim.
- Has been called the most ungodly and the worst of all Judah's kings.
- Became Babylon's vassal in 605 and the first deportation happened.

ZEDEKIAH (597-586)

- A son of Josiah, full brother of Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin's uncle.
- Nebuchadnezzar changes his name from Mattaniah to Zedekiah.
- Not as opposed to Jeremiah as Jehoiakim had been. He was more weak and vacillating and in fear of his nobles.
- Planned a rebellion in 593 with Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon.
- Conspired in 588 with Hophra, which led to the fall of Jerusalem. Zedekiah was blinded and deported.

ORIGINAL READERS?

- Did the book end up in Babylon with the Jews who were deported from Egypt in 562 (43:11-12, 46:19, Josephus)? At least ch 29 would have the exiles as its readers, and ch 50-51 was taken to Babylon.
- A rabbinical account says Jeremiah and Baruch also were deported, while a late, unattested tradition mentioned by Tertullian, Jerome and others say that he was stoned in Tahpanhes in Egypt.
- 44:14 and 28, however, could mean that the survivors in Egypt would not go to Babylon but back to Judah. In that case, they were the ones who brought it back to Judah during the exile.
- Difficult to know who read it first: The exiles, the remnant in Judah or the Jews in Egypt.

REPEATED VERSES/IDEAS

- 1:10, 18:7, 45:4
- 1:18, 15:20
- 2:27, 32:33, 18:17
- 2:28, 11:12-13
- 5:9, 9:9, 5:29
- 6:13-15, 8:10-12
- 7:30-33, 19:4-7, 32:35
- 8:15, 14:19
- 9:15-16, 23:15
- 11:20, 20:12
- 15:2, 43:11b
- 16:14, 23:7-8
- 20:4, 20:10, 46:5, 49:29, 6:25
(terror-all-around)
- 23:5-6, 33:15-16
- 23:7-8, 16:14-15
- 23:19, 30:23
- 7:12ff, 26:6
- 30:10-11, 46:27-28
- 31:36, 33:20ff, 33:25
- 49:18-19, 50:40
- 49:20-22, 50:44-46
- 49:26, 50:30
- 51:39, 51:57

PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHETS

- 2 Pet 1:20-21: *First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*
- Our basis should be the inspired interpretations in the NT:
 - Jer 31:31 in Heb 8:8-12 and 10:16-17. The new covenant is with *Israel and Judah*.
 - Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:15-18 (with Zech 8:22, Jer 12:15, Isa 45:21)
 - Hos 1:10, 2:23 in Rom 9:25-26 and 1 Pet 2:10.
 - *The root of Jesse/David* (Is 11:1, 10) is Jesus in Rom 15:12, Rev 5:5, 22:16.
 - Ezek 34, John 10: The Good Shepherd, my servant David.
 - Zech 14:8, John 7: Jesus seems to say that he is the eschatological rivers.
- It therefore seems safest to see the restorations as either 539 or spiritual.
- We should assume that the first fulfillment that fits is the fulfillment.
- We don't have clear Biblical evidence for double historical fulfillments, but if they exist the 2nd one is always Jesus.

3:14-18

- Did some from Israel return with Judah in 539 BC?
 - 1 Chr 9:3 - People from Ephraim and Manasseh lived in Judah after 539.
 - 2 Chr 31:6 - People from the northern kingdom lived in Judah also before 586.
 - Luke 2:36 - Anna was of Asher.
- v. 14: The temple on Zion will be for the whole nation again
- v. 15: The post-exilic leaders
- v. 16: The new covenant will come after 539.

3:14-18

- v. 17a: Salvation would come from Jerusalem and the Jews. A picture the hearers and readers would understand. The new covenant started in Jerusalem.
- v. 17b: *all nations shall gather* used Messianic in Isa 11:10 and Zech 8:22. To the readers Jerusalem was still the greatest symbol of God's presence on earth.
- v. 17c: The sending of the Spirit, or that the Gentiles will find God.
- v. 18a: *in those days* is usually used Messianic but historically in 5:18.
- v. 18b: *The land of the north*
 - Babylon in 6:22, 10:22, 16:15, 23:8, 31:8 and 46:10.
 - In 50:9 it is Assyria.
 - Only reference outside Jeremiah is Zech 2:6 (6:6-8).
 - Seems like he sees everything after 539 as one event and therefore goes back to 539 here. 1 Pet 1:11 could support this.

"THE FARTHEST PARTS OF THE EARTH"

- 6:22 - Used in a parallelism with *the land of the north*
- 25:32 - God's judgment on the known world through Babylon.
- 31:8 - Again with *the land of the north*. They would return from the exile.
- 50:41 - Also here with *the land of the north*. They would be taken into exile in Babylon.
- The farthest parts of the earth = The land of the north = Babylonia

7:31-32

- “Ge ben-Hinnom” becomes “Gehenna” in Greek.
- *Topheth*: the place in the valley of Ben Hinnom where children were offered to Molech. The word is thought to signify the place where the child was placed.
- *the days are surely coming*:
 - used historically: 7:32, 9:25, 16:14, 19:6, 23:7, 30:3, 31:27, 48:12, 49:2, 51:47, 52
 - used eschatologically: 23:5, 31:31, 33:14
- In 586, so many would die that they would have to use the valley as a cemetery instead of making sacrifices to Molech.



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13:1-11: THE USELESS LOINCLOTH

- *Perath* (v. 4) is often used of the Euphrates, but it runs about 560 km north of Anathoth. NIV has “Perath”, most other translations have Euphrates.
 - Jeremiah was away from Jerusalem for part of Jehoiakim’s reign, and perhaps he met Nebuchadnezzar then and therefore was treated well in 39:11-12.
 - Calvin and others believe it was enacted as a vision.
 - Others suggest it refers to Wadi Pharah (symbolically called Perath?) about 6 km north of Anathoth (Josh 18:23).
 - Some think it is Ephrata, the original name of Bethlehem, the first consonant omitted.
- Like the waistcloth is close to the body, Israel was chosen to be close to God.
- It was a symbol of how the intimacy between God and his people was gone. They had chosen to run away from him. Now they were ready for destruction - without God they were worthless.

DON'T PRAY FOR THEM

- 14:7-9: Jeremiah intercedes for the people
- 14:10-12: God does not listen at all and tells Jeremiah not to pray for them (for the 3rd time)
- 14:19-22: He intercedes for them anyway
- 15:1-6: God is tired of his people

JEREMIAH WANTS TO QUIT I

- 15:10 - “God, my life sucks!”
- 15:11 - Future in many translations (fulfilled in 21:1-2).
- 15:12 - They will not be able to stand against the Babylonians? Or reminding him of the promise in 1:18-19? (15:20)
- 15:13-14: To the people and not Jeremiah? Or is he saying that if he quits now, he will be taken into exile with the rest of the people?
- 15:15-18: “But I’m taking all this for you, God! I embraced this ministry, but you have tricked me! You didn’t tell me that it would be like this!”
- 15:19-21: Sounds like he actually quit (v. 19). God shows him grace, reminds him of his promise to deliver him, and says he should speak precious things, not worthless talk like this.

JEREMIAH WANTS TO QUIT 2

- 20:7-8 “You’ve tricked me! The messages you give me get me in trouble all the time!”
- 20:9: Even though he wanted to, he was not able to quit. It was more tiresome keeping the words back than to speak them.
- 20:11-13: He knows God will deliver him.
- 20:14-18: He is *really* tired of his life, but he was not able to quit.
- He cared more about God’s word than his own welfare, even though this surely bothered him. He went through a lot for the people who did not listen anyway.

WERE THEY GATHERED FROM SEVERAL NATIONS IN 539?

- Would return from many lands / nations:
16:15, 23:3, 8, 29:13-14 (!), 32:37.
- Would be scattered to several places / nations:
8:3, 9:16, 24:9, 29:18, 30:11.
- Jews scattered to Moab, Ammon, Edom and
all the countries returned to Judah after 586,
using the same phrase: 40:11-12, 43:5, 46:28.

THE POTTER (18:1-11)

- 18:7-8: Refers back to 1:10. They are facing destruction but will be restored if they repent. The disaster can be averted, God can change his mind, Jeremiah's words may not come true after all.
- 18:9-10: This also works the opposite way - if those destined for good do evil, God will change his mind and destroy them.
- An "if" all the way. The prophecies do not have to come true.
- The main point is not that God can give us a new start, but that he does what he wants with the clay depending on faith.
- The idea is repeated in Rom 9 where Paul uses it to justify God's actions, implying that God can save whoever he wants.

586-539 = 70 YEARS? (25:11)

- Spoken in 605 (25:1)
- Not primarily that Judah will be in exile for 70 years, but “these nations” (v. 9) will serve Babylon for 70 years. (Also 29:10)
- Babylon would be the world power for 70 years counting from 605. If the number is meant to be a round one, it could fit with the 66-68 years that actually elapsed until 539/538.
- Dan 9:2 - The destruction of Jerusalem seems to be connected to the 70 years that Babylon would rule, that it would not be reinhabited as long as Babylon was in charge.
- Also 70 years from 586 until the rededication of the temple in 516, but neither Jeremiah or Daniel is really talking about the temple here. They are talking about the city and the land that would be devastated.

LETTER TO THE EXILES (29:4-23)

- v. 2 - to those taken away in 597.
- v. 5-6: covenant blessings
- v. 7:
 - * Seek the welfare of the city + pray for it = your welfare
 - * Most of them liked it so much that they didn't want to return in 539.
- v. 11:
 - * God's plans for the exiles are good and not for their destruction.
 - * The meaning of this verse is not that God has a plan for each individual, but it is used collectively of the whole people in exile. The corresponding meaning could be more like God's plans of a heavenly future for us.
- Application:
 - * *As exiles on earth we should seek the welfare of our society and invest in it.*
 - * *We should plan ahead, even though Jesus can come back tomorrow.*
 - * *Don't get so tangled up in your worldly affairs that you forget your real home.*

30:3-11: 539 OR JESUS?

- v. 8a: *on that day* is used historically in 4:9.
- v. 8b: Doesn't have to mean "no more in eternity", but could just be "they will be set free", as in 539.
- v. 9: They will eventually serve the Messiah, after 539? They had to return so that the Messiah could come. Or is it all Messianic?
- v. 10-11:
 - Parallel in 46:27-28, where the context is historical judgment on Egypt.
 - Is this all Messianic because they didn't live in peace after 539? (Calvin)

THE NEW COVENANT (31:31-34)

- v. 31: The new covenant is with both Israel and Judah
 - * Both those who returned and those who were lost and were mixed with Gentiles. Not revealed that Gentiles are included here.
 - * Can “Israel and Judah” then be Messianic language sometimes?
- v. 33-34: Main characteristics of the new covenant
 - * The law will be put within them and written in their hearts:
 - They will relate to it in a new way.
 - It will be easier to keep.
 - * They shall all know God:
 - There will be no king or priesthood between God and his people except Jesus. God will have the same relationship with everyone.
 - Does not mean that teaching will not be necessary (cf. Paul’s letters), this has to do with how God’s people know God.

31:35-36

- The Jews will always exist as a people/nation?
 - * Because the covenant would be without value if they disappeared?
 - * History seems to confirm this interpretation, and it would show the faithfulness of God to his promises.
- The church will always exist?
 - * Usually in the NT the term “children of Abraham” is used about the church, it is not that clear that “Israel” is used about the church (but see 1 Cor 10:18, Phil 3:5).
- Same idea in 33:20-25 - does it favor physical Israel?

JEHOIAKIM BURNS THE SCROLL (CH 36)

- v. 1
 - * His 4th year was 605-604, and the scroll is read in his 5th year (v. 9).
 - * After Babylon had become the world power in 605, they marched down the coast of Palestine and captured the Philistine city of Ashkelon (late 604, corresponds with the 9th month in v. 9) with a massive destruction and a huge deportation.
 - * This triggered fear in Judah. Perhaps the reason for the fast (v. 9). Did they believe God would help, or a religious last resort?
- v. 3: God's goal is repentance.
- v. 16: One of the very few times that people listen.
- v. 23-25: Does he think this will nullify the prophecies? He should have repented, instead he shows contempt for the word of God.
 - * *Burning Bibles is a serious action. You show contempt for the word of God, and you show no sympathy with people who are persecuted and killed for having a Bible, and perhaps just great ignorance of the fact that people have died to make the Bible available in other languages than Latin.*

JEHOIAKIM BURNS THE SCROLL (CH 36)

- v. 30: Does God cut off his own promise to the Messianic line? Same about Jehoiachin in 22:30.
- Is this about the whole line or just his son? Zedekiah was a son of Josiah.
- Joseph was a descendant of Jehoiachin. Was Mary a descendant of David through Nathan (Luke 3) to avoid this curse on the line of Solomon?
- Does it mean that Jesus would get the right to the throne through being Joseph's adopted son, while having the bloodline through Mary?
- How did Jehoiakim die?
 - * Josephus says that Jehoiakim died when he was thrown over the wall of Jerusalem.
 - * 2 Chr 36:6 could say he was deported.
 - * Jeremiah 22:19 and 36:30 could agree with 2 Chr if "outside Jerusalem" is taken to mean way outside Jerusalem - in Babylon.

ORACLES TO THE NATIONS

- 1:5 - "I appointed you a prophet to the nations."
- Shows that God cares about them. They are not left in their own world. The point of bringing ch 50-51 to Babylon was to show them God.
- Parallels to Judah's exile and restoration. God cares about other nations also in the OT (Amos 9:7).
- The main reason for the judgment is their pride and arrogance. They trusted more in themselves than in God.

ORACLES TO THE NATIONS

- Babylon took:
 - * Ashkelon probably in 604
 - * Kedar & Hazor probably in 599-598
 - * Elam in 597
 - * Ammon and Moab in 582
 - * Egypt in 568
 - * Edom probably in 552
 - * Damascus unknown

APPLICATIONS

- The masses are not necessarily right.
- “The only thing we learn from history is that we never learn from history.” If we learn from our past we can make our failures into something positive.
- We should be careful with saying “God told me...” This could be taking the Lord’s name in vain. God does not like false prophets.
- God’s patience is shown in all the repetitions of the very same subject. Like he gave them MANY chances to repent, we also must reflect God in this and show grace to others.

APPLICATIONS

- Do we go to church like the people came to the temple? As a religious habit? That can be good for ourselves but is of no value and doesn't make us holy.
- Sometimes "peace, peace, peace" is not what a wound needs, but "repent". We need to disinfect it, not just put a band aid on top.
- Shouldn't it be allowed to criticize Israel when that obviously was very needed in the OT?
- Jeremiah did the work of God because he knew that the times were critical. What is critical now?

APPLICATIONS FROM JEREMIAH'S LIFE

- Don't make fun of "weird" Christians.
- God can use our emotions and sensitivity, yet we can still learn to be strong.
- Jeremiah was not postmodern but stuck to one thing.
- Don't let the world tell you if your life is a success or not. Perhaps even other Christians will think you are silly for choosing to live on a YWAM base in a remote place, perhaps being single, doing something you believe in, being a Jeremiah, instead of getting a "real" job, a house, a car and a family.

Have you ever walked alone at night
Like a man against the world
No one takes your side
A boat against the tide
When your faith is shaken
You start to break
And your heart can't find the words
Tossed upon the sand
I give you a man against the world

All the people cheer 'til the end is near
And the hero takes a fall
Then they'll drag you through the mud
You're only flesh and blood
Now I've walked the path
From dark to light
And they've yet to come to terms
Alone I take my stand
I'm only a man against the world

But love, like a distant reminder
It tugs at my shoulder
It calls me home
I shout, can a single voice carry
Will I find sanctuary within your arms
Someday when the answer's clearer
Someday when I even the score
You'll reach and you'll find me near you
Right beside you, forever more

But for now I'll walk the night alone
Like a man against the world
A brand new day will shine
Through the avalanche of time
Now the road's grown long
But the spirit's strong
And the fire within still burns
Alone I take my stand
I give you a man against the world