

Jeremiah Outline

Introduction: Jeremiah lived at one of the great crisis points of Jewish history: the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah was an eye witness to these events that marks his ministry like a branding iron.

The structure of the Book of Jeremiah is perplexing. More than any book we've read, the structure of Jeremiah is convoluted to the point of frustration. One scholar, Bernard Anderson, writes: "There is no clear organization or development of the book of Jeremiah." Many events appear out of sequence, and at times it's impossible to even say when a particular event occurred. Adding to the complexity, the Greek version of Jeremiah (the Septuagint) contains different sections and places the sections in a different order. So while it's always helpful when reading the Bible to remember it was written with a different sense for style, it's even more important to bear this in mind when reading Jeremiah. Read for the big picture, and please be patient when the narrative seems to shift...it is. ☺

Despite the confusion in the book of Jeremiah, understanding the historical influences that shapes the book is critical to understanding what is going on. Around Israel we see the fall of the mighty Assyrian empire, the rise of Egypt, but ultimately the triumph of Babylon. Within Israel itself we start with the great King Josiah who reforms the people, then watch as his reforms crumble under Jehoiakim, and then are destroyed under Zedekiah.

One of the most important innovations in Jeremiah is his unique ability to combine prophecy with lament. Jeremiah is known as the "weeping prophet" mainly because of his peculiar ability to deliver God's judgment while lamenting to God at the same time. Also, be alert for a new, near modern sense of the importance of the individual. Unlike in the past where collective punishment was the norm, Jeremiah believes the children will only be punished for their own sins, not the sins of their parents; and Jeremiah sees the day where God's law will be written upon the heart of every individual, imagining for the first time, a sense of conscience and widespread personal relationship with God.

Section One: Prophetic Oracles of Jeremiah

Chapter 1: Introduction to Jeremiah, son of Hilkiyah; call narrative- almond tree and boiling pot

Chapter 2: Complaint against Israel- Israel has forsaken the worship of God

Chapter 3: Israel like a faithless partner

Chapter 4: God calls Israel to come back, "circumcise foreskin of heart", enemy coming from North

Chapter 5: Search for one honest person fails, they have let justice go; prophets have failed

Chapter 6: People greedy for unjust gain; prophets cry "peace" where there is no peace

Chapter 7: Jeremiah attacks royal theology reminding the people of Shiloh- justice is what counts, not

Presumption of God's covenant; Valley of Hinnom

Chapter 8: Refrain repeat about false gain and peace; the balm of Gilead

Chapter 9: God's tears over the people, God calls the people to lament;

Chapter 10: Praise of God and God's creation

Chapter 11: God calls Jeremiah to prophesy; Jeremiah's lament over the response to his word

Chapter 12: Jeremiah questions God- why do the wicked prosper

Chapter 13: The image of the loincloth; the winejar

Chapter 14: Further vision of destruction; false prophets proclaiming hope; Jeremiah argues for Judah

Chapter 15: God does not relent; Jeremiah laments his own birth; God promises to be with Jeremiah

Chapter 16: Jeremiah is to have no family; the importance of the ancestors (the sins of the fathers)

Chapter 17: Psalm-like poetry; Jeremiah crying out about keeping the Sabbath holy

Chapter 18: The potter's house image: plots against Jeremiah

Chapter 19: Jeremiah breaks the jug in the valley of Hinnom

Chapter 20: Pashur the priest strikes Jeremiah, jails him, Jeremiah laments

Chapter 21: Zedekiah asks for Jeremiah to prophesy; Jeremiah says Babylon will triumph

Chapter 22: God sends J to Judah to speak out for justice; J speaks against the king's injustice

Chapter 23: Words against the religious leaders, the bad shepherds

Chapter 24: Two baskets of figs; the exiles and the leftovers

Chapter 25: Final vision of destruction

Section Two: Biographical Narratives of Jeremiah

Chapter 26: Jeremiah prophesies during Jehoiakim and people hate it; debate killing him

Chapter 27: King Zedekiah and the yoke image;

Chapter 28: The prophet Hananiah attacks Jeremiah saying exiles will return; Hananiah dies

Chapter 29: Jeremiah writes letters to exiles; put down roots; pray for welfare of Babylon

Chapter 30: Various oracles

Chapter 31: Con't- "A voice heard in Ramah" speech (see Matthew); end of collective retribution

Now individuals pay for own sins- not sins of parents; new law within; new covenant

Chapter 32: *Jeremiah buys field*

Chapter 33: God will destroy and rebuild

Chapter 34: Zedekiah frees the slaves but the people re-enslave them again- not good

Chapter 35: Jeremiah cites the Rechabites as example

Chapter 36: Jeremiah recites prophesy, Baruch records, and Jehoiakim burns the scroll piece by piece

Chapter 37: Jeremiah accused of deserting to Babylon and imprisoned

Chapter 38: People attempt to murder Jeremiah in a cistern; J saved by Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian

Zedekiah consults with Jeremiah

Chapter 39: Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem, Zedekiah blinded and captured, and Jeremiah freed

Chapter 40: Jeremiah stays with the new ruler, Gedeliah

Chapter 41: Gedeliah assassinated

Chapter 42: People want to go to Egypt but Jeremiah tells them to stay

Chapter 43: The people flee to Egypt and take Jeremiah with them

Chapter 44: Jeremiah speaks against the Israelites idolatry in Egypt

Chapter 45: Jeremiah speaks comforting words to Baruch in time of Jehoiakim

Section Three: Oracles Against the Nations

Chapter 46: Judgment against Egypt; salvation for Israel

Chapter 47: Judgment against Philistia

Chapter 48: Judgment against Moab

Chapter 49: Judgment against the Ammonites, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, and Elam

Chapter 50: Judgment against Babylon (Very important for the author of Revelation later)

Chapter 51: Further destruction against Babylon

Section Four: The Fall of Jerusalem

Chapter 52: Zedekiah rebels against Babylon, eyes put out and captured; people exiled; Jehoiachin

Finds favor in Babylon

Texts to know: The call of Jeremiah (Chapter 1); Prophet's crying 'Peace, peace' where there is no peace (Chapter 6); the image of the potter's house (Chapter 18); the new covenant (Chapter 31); Jeremiah buys a field (Chapter 32)