**An Introduction To The Book Of Jeremiah (Lesson 1)**

**I. Basic Facts**

A. By original language word count, the longest (33,002 words in the Lexham Hebrew text). Lamentations would tack on another 2,324 words for a grand total of 35,326 words!

B. 22nd book of the OT; 17 OT & 27 NT books to follow; total of 44 books to follow

C. Jeremiah’s Personal Background:

1. Son of Hilkiah the priest (1:1). Compare Ezekiel and Zechariah (Ezek. 1:3; Neh. 12:1, 4, 16; Zech. 1:1).

2. From Anathoth (1:1; Josh. 21:18). This was a priestly village located in the territory of Benjamin about 2-3 miles NE of Jerusalem.

3. His name means “YHWH hurls/exalts.”

D. Date For The Book: 627-586 B.C.

1. Began in the 13th year of Josiah (1:2; 25:3).

2. Kings during this period:

a. Josiah (640-608 B.C.) – killed in battle with Egypt (2Kgs. 23:29)

b. Jehoahaz (608 B.C. only 3 months) – taken to Egypt (2Kgs. 23:33f)

c. Jehoiakim (608-597 B.C.) – 1st exile in 605 B.C. after Battle of Carchemish (includes Daniel – Dan. 1:1f; Jer. 25:1-11)

d. Jehoiachin (597 B.C. only 3 months) – 2nd exile to Babylon (includes Ezekiel and Jehoiachin – 2Kgs. 24:10-17; 25:27-30; Ezek. 1:1-3)

e. Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.) – 3rd exile and destruction of Jerusalem (2Kgs. 25:1-7; Zedekiah blinded after sons slain and he is deported to Babylon; Jeremiah remains behind)

3. Contemporary Prophets: Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Daniel, Ezekiel

E. *“The times in which Jeremiah lived were both exciting and trying. The nation had become exceedingly corrupt; idolatry and its attendant evils had robbed the people of practically all spiritual values and concepts. What few people had a semblance of faith toward God put that faith in the presence of the temple and the external rituals of the law, rather than true trust in Jehovah. Jeremiah lived under the reign of Judah’s last good king, Josiah, who attempted a reform among the people, but it was primarily external; he did not get to the hearts of the nation. Josiah’s rule was followed by that of four faithless and wicked men. The end was fast approaching. Babylon was on the march. Such times bring out the true greatness or baseness of one’s character.”* (Homer Hailey, Foreword for Robert Harkrider’s workbook on Jeremiah)

**II. About Jeremiah’s Work**

*A. The Preacher*

1. Jeremiah felt an uncontrollable urge to proclaim the message of God. When he tried to hold back the word became a fire in his bones (20:8f). The purpose of his preaching is succinctly stated (1:10).

2. Jeremiah seems to have begun his preaching in his hometown of Anathoth His words angered people; they ordered him not to prophecy (11:21).

3. During his early years he may have commuted to Jerusalem to deliver his messages of denunciation. He covered the city with his words (7:2; 17:19; 19:1; 22:1; 26:2; 32:2; 37:7). On one occasion he went throughout the land (11:6). God was his only defense (26:12).

4. God spoke through Jeremiah’s life as well as his lips. Jeremiah, it seems, never married. This was intended to demonstrate how perilous times were (16:1-4). He refrained from parties and joyous occasions (16:8f). All such would soon cease. Neither did he attend funerals (16:5-7). In the captivity there would be so many to die that there would be no time for customary funerals. What a sad life!

5. Jeremiah used dramatic symbols and visual aids. The clergy of that day cast aspersions upon him and hinted that he was deranged (29:26).

*B. The Writer*

1. He felt bound to deal with some delusions of the captives so he wrote (29:1). False prophets in Babylon fired back a letter to the high priest demanding that Jeremiah be silenced (29:24-29).

2. When Jeremiah was forbidden to preach, he wrote out his sermons. A scroll was dictated. This was the first edition of our book. Jehoiakim, the king, slashed it to pieces. Jeremiah than produced a second copy with “many like words” (36:32).

3. He also composed many lamentations. He lamented the death of King Josiah (2Chron. 35:25). In the oldest Hebrew Bible, Lamentations is a part of the book of Jeremiah.

*C. The Intercessor*

1. The book is rich in though-provoking material on the subject of prayer. In prayer, the prophet acknowledges God’s disciplinary dealings (5:3). In the midst of a tirade on idolatry, Jeremiah bursts forth in a prayer of praise (10:6f). In prayer, Jeremiah asks for clarification of a command (32:25).

2. When pointing out false prophets he said they did not engage in intercessory prayer (27:18). Jeremiah regarded intercession as one of the marks of a true prophet.. Different words are used. One has overtures of presenting a logical defense. “To stand before” means “to wait upon”, the idea of using one’s influence. The third has the idea of an emotional appeal.

3. Jeremiah prayed on behalf of his people. Twice Zedekiah requested prayer (21:2; 37:3). After Gedaliah was assassinated, the leaders requested prayer for guidance (42:2, 20). 3x God instructs Jeremiah not to pray (7:16:11:14; 14:11). Intercession was a part of his ministry (18:20). One of the most beautiful examples is 14:19-22.

*D. The Statesman*

1. Israel was a theocracy, a nation under God. Because of this, most prophets necessarily got involved in political activity. Jeremiah’s position was that Judah should yield to Babylon. Yet, Babylon would soon fall.

2. Jeremiah was not a prophet of fatalism or nihilism. Judah would be defeated, but would also survive (chapter 32). Jeremiah had patriotism of a deeper level. Israel had a divinely appointed work. If she failed, she had no further right to exist. Judah was in rebellion to God. God revealed the course of events

*E. The Counselor*

1. Zedekiah the king had many agonizing decisions to make. He sought for Jeremiah for counsel (37:17; 38:14). Jeremiah spelled out the alternatives. If Zedekiah surrenders, the city will be saved. Jeremiah tried to get him to see that selfish considerations must be set aside.

2. Jeremiah knew personal agony and despondency and thus how to have empathy with others. To Baruch (45). To Ebed-melech (39:15-18).

**III. Challenges He Faced – Nicknamed “The Weeping Prophet”**

A. Sorrow over the condition of his people (2:5, 8, 11, 13, 19; 5:30f; 6:10-16).

B. Brokenhearted because of the coming judgment (4:19f; 8:21f; 9:1; 13:17; 23:9).

C. Grief over his own personal heavy burden (15:10; 20:14-18).

D. Persecuted by his people relentlessly. They viewed him as a traitor.

1. Plots to kill him in hometown (11:18-23)

2. Propaganda against him (18:18)

3. Scourged and put in stocks (19:14-20:6)

4. Fellow prophet killed (26:20-24)

5. Imprisoned (37:11-15)

6. Taken from dungeon to court of the guard and fed only bread (37:16-21)

7. Cast in muddy cistern/pit (38:1-13)

E. *“We find him sensitive to a most painful degree, timid, shy, hopeless, despondent, constantly complaining and dissatisfied with the course of events, but never flinching from duty. ... Timid in resolve, he was unflinching in execution; as fearless when he had to face the whole world as he was dispirited and prone to murmuring when alone with God. Judged be his own estimate of himself, he was feeble, and his mission a failure; really, in the hour of action and when duty called him, he was in very truth ‘a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land’ (1:18). He was a noble example of the triumph of the moral over the physical nature.”* (William Smith, *Bible Dictionary,* 289).

**IV. Messianic Prophecies**

*A. His Coming*

1. The man would come in "the latter days" (30:24; 48:47; 49:6, 39). - Fulfillment in Acts 2:16f; Heb. 1:1f

2. The ruler would come from the stock of Israel (30:21).

- Fulfillment in Matt. 2:6

3. There would be great weeping at the birth of this man (31:15).

- Fulfillment in Matt. 2:17

*B. His Purpose*

4. Messiah would serve another king of kings named David (23:5-8; 30:9; 33:14-16).

- Fulfillment in Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:30-36

5. The man would be a perpetual priest and king (33:17f).

- Fulfillment in Heb. 7:25-28; 8:1; 9:11f; 10:10-14

6. The man would seal a new covenant (31:31-34; 50:5).

- Fulfillment in Heb. 8:8-11; 10:16f

7. The man would prohibit Jerusalem from falling (31:38-40).

- Fulfillment in Heb. 12:22-28

*C. His Effect*

8. The coming of this man would bring about a new attitude (31:29f).

- Fulfillment in Rom. 2:6-11; 14:12; Gal. 6:5-8

9. He’d lead the people of Israel back to Zion (3:14-18; 31:6; 32:36-44).

- Fulfillment in Heb. 12:22f

10. The man would provide ceaseless descendants of Israel (31:35-37).

- Fulfillment in Rom. 9:7f; Gal. 3:26-29; 6:16

11. The man would save a remnant (31:7).

- Fulfillment in Rom. 9:27f; 11:5

12. The people of earth would be His (30:22; 31:1, 7, 14, 33; 32:38; 33:24).

- Fulfillment in 2Cor. 6:14-18

**V. Outline of the Book**

***Chapter 1***: Jeremiah’s Call

***Chapters 2-20***—Prophecies Concerning Judah & Jerusalem During Josiah’s Reign (627-608 B.C.)

***Chapters 21-39***—Prophecies of Specific Events During the Reign of Jehoiakim (608- 597 B.C.) and Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.)

A. Zedekiah (21-24)

B. 4th Year of Jehoiakim (25-26)

C. 4th Year of Zedekiah (27-29)

D. Book of Consolation (30-33)

E. Zedekiah (34)

F. Jehoiakim (35-36)

G. Zedekiah (37-39)

***Chapters 40-44***—Jeremiah’s Ministry to Judah After the Fall of Jerusalem (post-586 B.C.)

***Chapters 45-51***—Prophecies Against Foreign Nations

***Chapter 52***—The Fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.)

**VI. Lessons To Take Away From Jeremiah**

A. God judges all wickedness, even, and especially, among His own people.

B. Patient perseverance. Jeremiah epitomizes what Christians are called to endure.

C. Stand for the truth even when everyone else has fallen for a lie.

D. Never replace God with false gods, idols, and created things.

E. Let God’s Word be a burning fire in your soul.

F. You will have people who hate and despise you, but you will also have people who step up in big ways for you (e.g. Ebed-Melech).

G. Leadership isn’t always what it should be. Even though that is the case, that does not justify evil actions or inaction when action should be taken.