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Jeremiah
and the
Fall of Jerusalem

The Life and Ministry of Jeremiah in Historical context using
the Chronology found in The NIV Chronological Study Bible

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IN SEARCH OF

JEREMIAH AND THE FALL
OF JERUSALEM

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Credits

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Peter Lim is the author and producer of Pristine World's Visual Bible Explorer Series. He is also the General Editor and publisher of the Family Church History Series of books. These books have been translated into multiple languages and distributed across several countries. He has travelled extensively in the Bible countries and is a history enthusiast. Prior to being a publisher he worked for 20 years in the I.T. industry. He is a member of the Damansara Utama Methodist Church.

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Dr. Tan generously devoted her time to review the completed draft of this book, giving insightful feedback and thoughtful suggestions. Her expertise has not only provided guardrails for some of the paraphrasing portions of the story, but also enriched the lessons and reflections suggested in the book. I am deeply grateful for the knowledge and reflective perspective she contributed to the writing of this book.

Project Advisor: Mr Chai Cheng Sheng



Mr Chai, an Elder of the Bandar Sunway Gospel Centre, served as Project Advisor for this effort to create a compelling story detailing the life and ministry of Jeremiah in a chronological timeline. I would like to express my thanks to him for generously spending time reviewing multiple drafts of this work on Jeremiah's life story. His knowledge of the subject matter and advice on practical applications is much appreciated.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Ms Eva Hew and Ms Eleanor Woo, for proof-reading the book.

Author's Preface

The book of Jeremiah holds the distinction of being the longest book in the Bible by word count. Among the top three longest books, Jeremiah comes first with approximately 33,000 words, followed by Genesis with 32,000, and Psalms with 30,000. While every book of the Bible carries deep meaning, the length and depth of Jeremiah suggests it holds a wealth of lessons for today's readers.

Jeremiah was written in one of the most turbulent times in the history of Israel. The prophet's ministry spanned over 40 years, and he lived through the reigns of 5 kings of Judah, each with a different duration and influence on their nation. His life and ministry corresponds with events described in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

However, the book of Jeremiah is not arranged in chronological order. Instead, the content is grouped according to themes or topics and some content is not dated. For instance, the oracles against foreign nations appear together in chapters 46 to 51, while messages of hope and restoration are gathered in chapters 30 to 33, regardless of when Jeremiah delivered them. The structure emphasizes the flow of God's messages within a certain topic rather than the sequence of events. This can make it challenging if you are trying to follow the story of Jeremiah's life from start to finish.

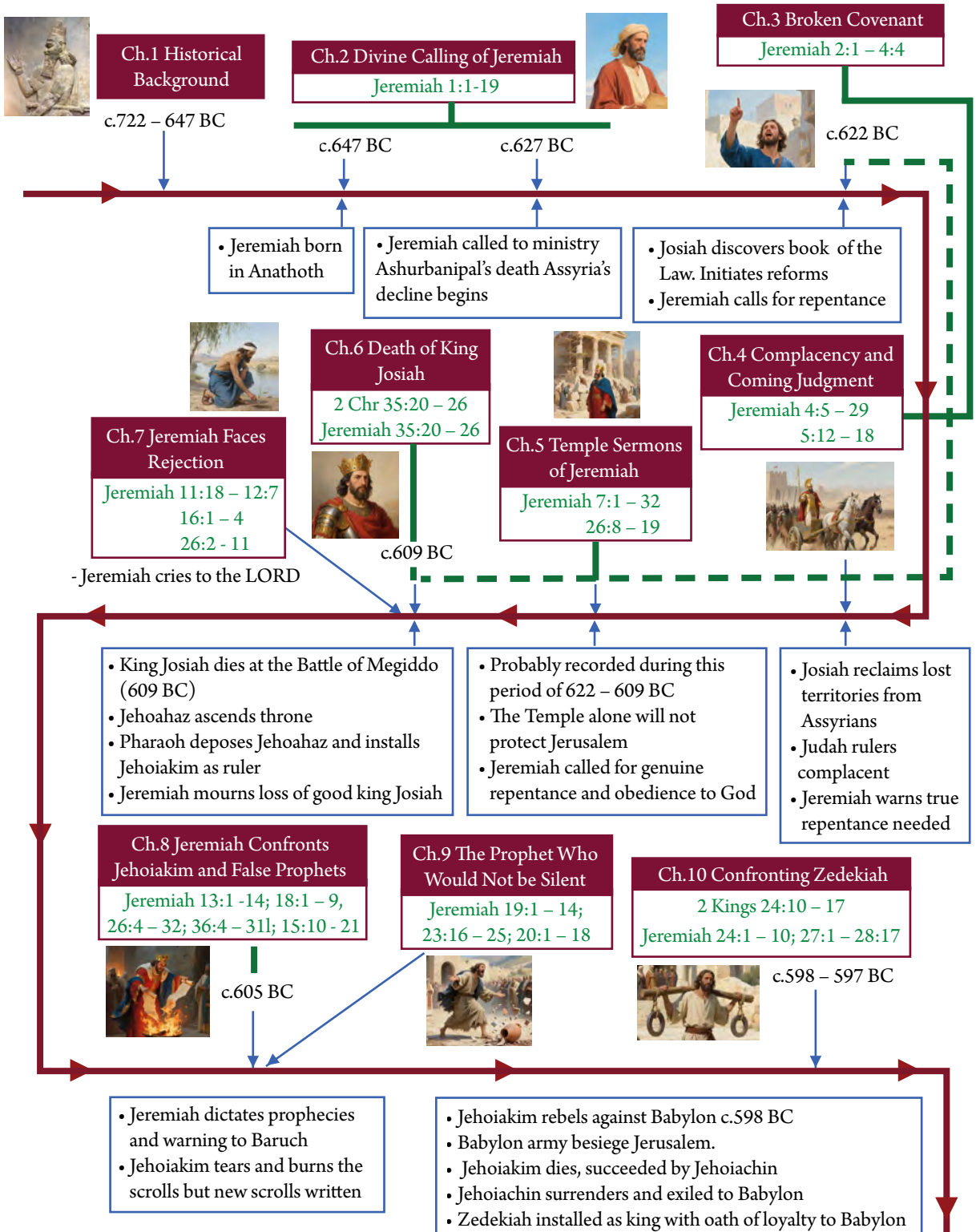
In this book, we have attempted to arrange the life, ministry, and curated messages of Jeremiah in as close a chronological order as possible, within the larger historical context of his time – a time where great empires rose and fell, and small nations like Judah got squashed between the giants. By placing Jeremiah's story in its historical setting, we believe readers will gain a clearer understanding and deeper appreciation of his powerful messages. I have used The NIV Chronological Study Bible as the main source of reference for re-arranging the book of Jeremiah according to the order in which it likely happened.

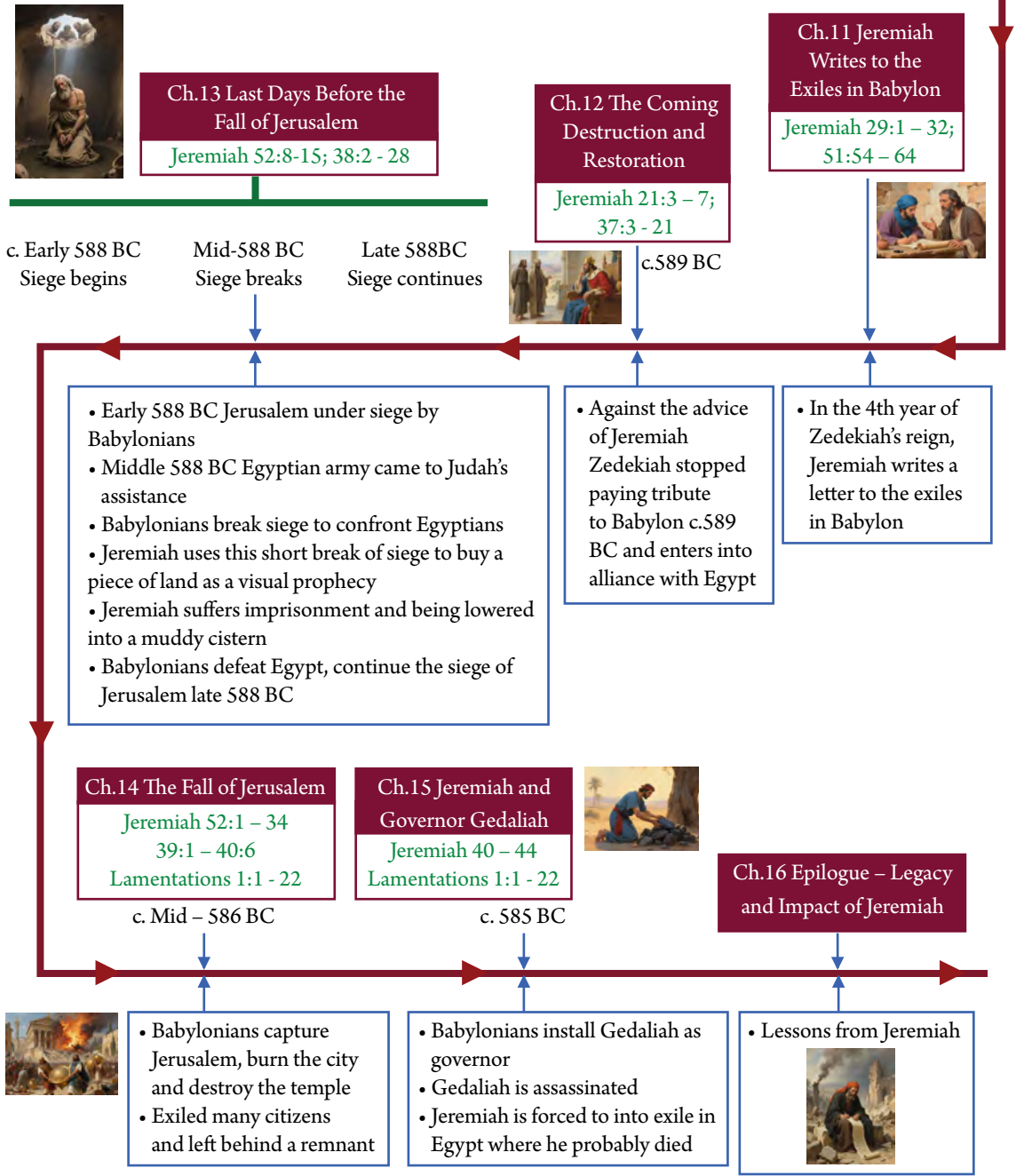
We hope you will enjoy reading this book and that it will inspire you to explore the full text of Jeremiah in the Bible and to reflect more deeply on the faithfulness of a prophet who stood firm in the midst of rejection, persecution, and national crisis.

Peter C. T. Lim
Pristine World
November 2025

Notes: The NIV (New International Version), and NLT (New Living Translation) uses American spelling. The NIVUK uses British English spelling. We have also standardized some names like Necho and Neco to just Neco

Chronology of Jeremiah's Life





Reference: The NIV Chronological Study Bible

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO JEREMIAH

We begin our story in the early 8th century BC, when the once-proud kingdoms of Israel and Judah had become vassals of the mighty Assyrian Empire. King Hoshea of Israel and King Ahaz of Judah both paid heavy tributes to keep Assyria's army at bay. But Israel, weary of paying tribute and foreign domination, rebelled. Hoshea stopped paying tribute and reached out to Egypt for help—an act of defiance that would seal his kingdom's fate.

Yet this act was only the surface of a deeper problem. Long before this political

rebellion, Israel had already turned its heart away from the LORD. The people had broken their covenant with God, worshipped idols, and ignored His prophets. Their lives were also filled with unethical practices resulting in social injustices in their community. As a nation, Israel was not doing well spiritually, politically, and morally.

The Sargon II Barrel



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*

The Sargon II Barrel describes the conquest of Samaria, the capital of Israel and the prisoners taken into exile. In the cuneiform text engraved on the barrel, Sargon claims, "I besieged and conquered the town of Samaria, led away as prisoners 27,290 inhabitants of the it ... and settled therein people from countries which I myself had conquered".

The Face of Sargon II



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*

Alabaster bas-relief from the royal palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad, c. 722-705 BC. Made in c. 700 BC, now in the Iraq Museum of Baghdad.

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO JEREMIAH

God allowed the Assyrian Empire to rise and carry out His discipline. The Assyrians responded swiftly. King Shalmaneser laid siege to Samaria, and after three years, in 722 BC, the city fell. The conquest was harsh: thousands were deported, scattered across foreign lands, never to return. Israel's downfall was not just the result of political miscalculation—it was the consequence of forsaking their covenant with the LORD.

Judah watched from the south. For a time, they had a righteous king—Hezekiah. He trusted in the LORD and resisted Assyria too. In 701 BC, sensing Assyria's internal weakness, Hezekiah rebelled. The Assyrians stormed through Judah, capturing cities one by one. Lachish, a fortress city was captured and Jerusalem was next. King Sennacherib mocked Hezekiah's faith and defences.

The Lachish Relief



Source: *Wikimedia Commons a royalty free site*

By *Shadsluiter* - This image has been extracted from another file, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=94235365>

The Lachish Relief. A picture inscription showing the conquest of Lachish in Judah by Sennacherib. The giant wall carving was discovered by British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard in ruins of the ancient city Nineveh between 1845-1847. Today it is on display in the British Museum. The story, told in multiple plates, tell the saga of how the Assyrian army broke through the fortress of Lachish and forced many of the people of Judah into exile. It does not mention Jerusalem, which would have been the Jewel in the crown. The Relief was placed in the palace of Sennacherib like a trophy to showcase his military conquests. The narrative is described in detail in 2 Kings 18-19, Isaiah 36-37 and 2 Chronicles 32.

Source: *Wikimedia Commons*,
User: *oncenawhile* - Own work,
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The Last panel of the Relief has the inscription: "Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria, sat on the throne as the plunder of Lachish passed before him."



INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO JEREMIAH



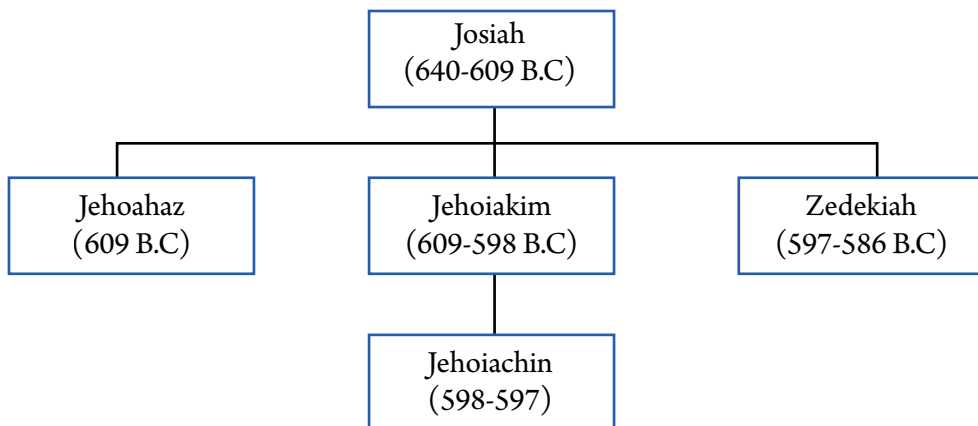
Source: Wikimedia Commons
Destruction of Sennacherib's army
A word carving by Gustav Dore, 1891.

But Hezekiah turned to God in prayer—and God answered. The prophet Isaiah assured him: Jerusalem would be spared. That very night, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers mysteriously died. Sennacherib fled back to Nineveh, humiliated.

The miraculous rescue during Hezekiah's reign became one of the most celebrated stories in Judah's history. But in time, this great deliverance was misunderstood. A hundred years later, many in Jeremiah's day clung to that past miracle, assuming that God would always protect Jerusalem simply because the temple stood there. What had once been a sign of God's mercy now became a stumbling block—used by false prophets to mislead the nation, giving them a false sense of security. As a result, everyone turned a blind eye to their own sins, while assuming that they continued to live in God's favour.

After Hezekiah's death, his son Manasseh took the throne. He ruled for five decades, becoming the longest reigning king of Judah, but he undid his father's faithfulness, plunging Judah into deep idolatry and sin. He even sacrificed one of his sons to pagan gods. For this, God allowed the Assyrians to capture Manasseh and drag him to Babylon in chains. There, in humiliation, he repented. God heard his

Timeline of the last kings of Judah



INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO JEREMIAH

prayer and restored him, but the damage to Judah's spiritual state had been done.

Manasseh's son Amon followed, but his reign was short and wicked. After just two years, he was assassinated. The people rose up, executed the conspirators, and placed Amon's 8-year-old son Josiah on the throne. Josiah came to power at a crucial moment. Assyria was crumbling. Egypt had stopped paying tribute, and Babylon—Assyria's long-time rival—rebelled with help from the Medes. As Assyria pulled its troops back to defend itself, Judah slipped into a period of independence.

King Josiah seized the moment. He reclaimed lost northern territories of Judah and, under the influence of priests and the prophet Zephaniah, launched sweeping religious reforms. The discovery of the Book of the Law in the temple sparked a revival. Josiah called the nation to return to the ways of God.

It was during this time that a young prophet named Jeremiah stepped into the scene. His message, however, went deeper than national reform. Rituals and traditions were not enough—God was calling for personal repentance.

Jeremiah's message was not popular. Many priests and officials dismissed Jeremiah as just another loud young voice. But his words would echo through the reigns of five kings: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

Jeremiah's ministry unfolded as Assyria faded into history and Babylon rose to dominate the ancient world. His was a voice in the storm—calling a stubborn nation back to the heart of God. This is the story of Jeremiah.

Key People in the Story (Besides Jeremiah)

1. King Josiah (Reigned 640–609 BC)

The last godly king of Judah. Josiah began ruling as a child and grew into a passionate reformer. When the forgotten Book of the Law was discovered during temple repairs, he led a national revival, calling the people back to God. Jeremiah began his ministry during Josiah's reign—a time of hope and spiritual renewal.

2. King Jehoahaz (Reigned briefly in 609 BC)

Josiah's son. He ruled for only three months before Pharaoh Neco of Egypt deposed him and sent him into exile. His short reign marked the beginning of Judah's rapid decline.

3. King Jehoiakim (Reigned 609–598 BC)

Another of Josiah's sons, placed on the throne by the Egyptians. Unlike his father, Jehoiakim ignored Jeremiah's warnings. He famously cut up and burned Jeremiah's scroll of prophecies—showing just how much he hated God's message. He was known for arrogance, injustice, and defiance toward Babylon.

4. King Jehoiachin (Reigned 598–597 BC)

Jehoiakim's son. His reign lasted only three months before Babylon invaded. Because he surrendered, Jerusalem was not destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin into exile, along with the best and brightest of Judah's people.

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO JEREMIAH

5. **King Zedekiah (Reigned 597–586 BC)**

The last king of Judah and uncle to Jehoiachin. Zedekiah was a weak leader, caught between the advice of his officials and Jeremiah's bold warnings. Though he often sought Jeremiah's counsel, he rarely acted on it. His failure to obey God's word led to Jerusalem's destruction.

6. **Baruch**

Jeremiah's faithful scribe and companion. Baruch wrote down Jeremiah's words and read them aloud in public, risking his life in the process. Through it all, he remained loyal, even when both he and Jeremiah were in danger.

7. **Ebed-Melech**

A brave servant from Ethiopia who worked in the royal palace. When Jeremiah was thrown into a muddy cistern to die, Ebed-Melech courageously intervened and saved his life—proving that faithfulness can come from the most unexpected places.

8. **Pashhur son of Immer**

A priest in charge of the temple who strongly opposed Jeremiah. When he did not like what Jeremiah was preaching, he had him beaten and locked in the stocks (Jeremiah 20:1–2). He stands as a symbol of religious leaders who reject truth.

9. **Hananiah**

A false prophet who publicly contradicted Jeremiah's warnings, claiming that Babylon's threat would soon disappear. His lies brought false hope and confusion among the people—and a stern rebuke from Jeremiah.

10. **King Nebuchadnezzar**

Ruler of Babylon and the most powerful man in the region at that time. He invaded Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, and carried its people into exile. Jeremiah described him as God's instrument of judgment—though Nebuchadnezzar likely never understood that role himself.

11. **Gedaliah**

After the exile, the Babylonian commander appointed Gedaliah as governor over the few people left in Judah. His task was to help the land recover. Sadly, he was assassinated, plunging the land into further chaos and driving the remaining people to flee to Egypt.

CHAPTER 2

THE DIVINE CALLING OF JEREMIAH

REFERENCE: JEREMIAH 1:1-19



The calling of young Jeremiah to ministry

Jeremiah's ancestors



High Priest Abiathar, an ancestor of Jeremiah, was expelled by King Solomon for supporting his brother, who was attempting to usurp the throne. This could be the reason why Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah, also a priest, was very sensitive and careful to avoid offending the reigning king.

The Story Begins

The story of Jeremiah begins in the southern kingdom of Judah, during a time of great change. He was born around 647 BC in a small town called Anathoth, located in the territory of Benjamin. Anathoth was no ordinary town—it was a special city given to the priests, as described in Joshua 21:18. Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah, was one of those priests. This means Jeremiah grew up in a religious family, likely learning about God's laws and the traditions of Israel from a young age.

Then, when Jeremiah was still very young—probably not even 20 years old—something extraordinary happened. In the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign, around 627 BC, God called Jeremiah to be His prophet. Ashurbanipal died in 631 BC. During this time, there was another major turning point in world history. His death led to Assyria's decline and opened the door for Babylon to rise as the next world power.

The first chapter of *Jeremiah* sets the stage for everything that follows. It tells us when Jeremiah was called and when his ministry ended—at the time when Jerusalem fell and its people were taken into exile around 586 BC. That means Jeremiah served as a prophet for about 40 years, faithfully

THE DIVINE CALLING OF JEREMIAH

speaking God's word through political turmoil, war, and national disaster.

The book of *Jeremiah* does not try to hide how things end. Since we are told from the beginning that Jerusalem will fall, this story is not about the suspense of what is going to happen or whether there would be a surprise ending. Instead, the focus is on why it all happened—on the messages God gave Jeremiah and how the people responded. These messages were meant to warn, correct, encourage repentance and ultimately offer hope. They were written not just for the people of Judah, but for future generations—including us.

As we journey through the life of Jeremiah and reflect on selected passages from both the Book of Jeremiah and Lamentations, one key question should guide us: What lessons can we draw from Jeremiah's life and the messages he proclaimed? Though Lamentations is traditionally attributed to Jeremiah, some scholars suggest it may have been recorded by his faithful scribe, Baruch. Either way, the deep sorrow and spiritual insight in those laments echo the heart of a prophet burdened for his people. These timeless truths continue to speak powerfully into the challenges of our world today.

The goal of this book is to better understand Jeremiah's messages more clearly by placing them in their historical setting. When we see what was happening around him—both in Judah and in the empires around—it helps us better

understand what God was saying through him.

Jeremiah 1 These are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests from the town of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. ² The Lord first gave messages to Jeremiah during the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah ³ The Lord's messages continued throughout the reign of King Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, until the eleventh year of the reign of King Zedekiah, another of Josiah's sons. In August of that eleventh year the people of Jerusalem were taken away as captives. (NLT)

Jeremiah was probably a priest or a priest-in-training when he was called by God for a special ministry. When Jeremiah first told his family of how God had spoken to him, we can imagine that they probably must have been quite happy or surprised. His father was a priest and they lived in Anathoth, a city allocated to priests in the tribal land of Benjamin. Their attitude would change later when they found out the prophetic message he was going to deliver.

Historical context:



King Josiah had discovered the book of the Law while repairing the Temple of Jerusalem and had instituted reforms and brought the people back to worshipping Yahweh. It looks like, either the people had still secretly kept their idol worship practices and only shown an outward appearance of returning to Yahweh, the God of Israel, or that they had backslidden to their old ways of idol worship and this happened after the death of Josiah.

THE DIVINE CALLING OF JEREMIAH



Jeremiah writes of his calling:
Jeremiah 1:4 The Lord gave me this message:

⁵“I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.”

⁶“O Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I can’t speak for you! I’m too young!”⁷ The Lord replied, “Don’t say, ‘I’m too young,’ for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. ⁸ And don’t be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and will protect you. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

⁹Then the Lord reached out and touched my mouth and said, “Look, I have put my

words in your mouth! ¹⁰ Today I appoint you to stand up against nations and kingdoms. Some you must uproot and tear down, destroy and overthrow. Others you must build up and plant.” (NLT)

Young Jeremiah must have realized that such a calling would require courageous and unpleasant confrontations with the leaders and rulers of Israel. How could he carry out such a task, he must have wondered. What credentials did he carry? He was only a young man with no experience or reputation.

Wasn’t Josiah a good king? Didn’t Josiah initiate religious reforms under the guidance of the priests? Jeremiah’s father was a priest and said many good things about the king. But God was telling Jeremiah that the people’s hearts were still not right. While they were worshipping God in the temple, they were still burning incense to other gods and worshipping idols made with their own hands. Judgment was coming to Judah for their disobedience to God.

Why should anyone, especially the king who was surrounded by his court prophets and priests, believe him? The Assyrians were a declining power, and Judah was enjoying political freedom and prosperity. Who would believe him?

Jeremiah 1:11 Then the Lord said to me, “Look, Jeremiah! What do you see?” And I replied, “I see a branch from an almond tree.”

THE DIVINE CALLING OF JEREMIAH

¹² And the Lord said, “That’s right, and it means that I am watching, and I will certainly carry out all my plans.”

¹³ Then the Lord spoke to me again and asked, “What do you see now?” And I replied, “I see a pot of boiling water, spilling from the north.”

¹⁴ “Yes,” the Lord said, “for terror from the north will boil out on the people of this land.

¹⁵ Listen! I am calling the armies of the kingdoms of the north to come to Jerusalem. I, the Lord, have spoken!

“They will set their thrones at the gates of the city. They will attack its walls and all the other towns of Judah.

¹⁶ I will pronounce judgment on my people for all their evil—for deserting me and burning incense to other gods. Yes, they worship idols made with their own hands!

Just as he feared, the message he was to deliver was going to be devastating. Judgment was coming.

¹⁷ “Get up and prepare for action. Go out and tell them everything I tell you to say.

Do not be afraid of them, or I will make you look foolish in front of them.

¹⁸ For see, today I have made you strong like a fortified city that cannot be captured, like an iron pillar or a bronze wall. You will stand against the whole land—the kings, officials, priests, and people of Judah.

¹⁹ They will fight you, but they will fail. For I am with you, and I will take care of you.

I, the Lord, have spoken!” (NLT)

This must have been a terrifying message for Jeremiah to deliver. Just like Moses at the burning bush, called to confront Pharaoh, the mighty king of Egypt, Jeremiah knew, he was now called to deliver a very unpleasant and unpopular message to the established leaders of Judah.

Lessons from the Story

1. God had a purpose for Jeremiah’s life, even before he was born. At the right time, God would call on Jeremiah to fulfill the task that God had set out for him.
2. Being in the will of God and following Him in obedience can sometimes be very tough. Jeremiah’s task was set out for him and he knew it was going to be an uphill challenge. God did not promise an easy life, but He did promise that He will be with Jeremiah. That was the key to Jeremiah’s strength.

Lessons from the Story

3. When God calls us, He will equip us. Jeremiah said he was ‘too young’ for such a difficult task to which he was called. Not having the talent, the skill, or the credentials for a given job can seem daunting. However, as Jeremiah will see, God will equip him, and provide him with the help when it is needed. God provided him a very capable scribe and the right people at the right places when Jeremiah’s life was in danger. God does not call the ‘qualified’ – He qualifies the called.
4. The vision of the almond branch meant that God was always watching and this was also a warning to the people. A warning that God was aware of the people’s unrighteousness, and that He would soon act on His own words of judgment. The following vision of the boiling pot warned that trouble was on the way.

This is because the Hebrew word for almond tree is šāqēd which sounds like the word for keeping watch, šāqad. God keeping watch in this instance is not comforting but a warning. A warning that God is aware of the people’s unrighteousness, and God will soon act upon His own words of judgment. Indeed, the following vision of the boiling pot warns that trouble is on the way.

Comments by: Dr Tan Ee Yan



Discussion Questions

1. God told Jeremiah: “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born, I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.” What does this verse say about God’s plan for each one of us? How can we fulfil the plans and potential that God has designed for us?
2. Jeremiah felt he was too young and inexperienced to do the task God had set out for him. Have you ever felt like that? How can God use you now, in your school, your home, or within your group of friends?
3. What did the almond branch and boiling pot symbolize? What do they tell us about God’s nature and how He watches and judges the world?
4. God told Jeremiah to “get ready”, and promised to make him strong like a fortified city. What does it take to be spiritually strong in today’s world? What can you do to prepare yourself to be strong in the faith and to be ready for future ministry for God?

CHAPTER 3

BROKEN COVENANT: GOD'S GRIEF AND CALL TO REPENTANCE

REFERENCE: JEREMIAH 2:1 – 4:4



Jeremiah was told to speak to the people in Jerusalem

Now, Jeremiah was given a message to bring to Jerusalem; of how they had broken the Law of God. Although he was only a young man, Jeremiah was given a very stern message, like that of an accusing law giver, to bring before the people and leaders in Jerusalem.

Why was he chosen to bring this message? Couldn't he continue serving as a priest, like his father did and settle down to a

quiet life in Anathoth where he was born? But his faithfulness to God called him to be obedient to the task given to him.

Jeremiah 2:1¹ **The Lord gave me another message. He said,** ² **“Go and shout this message to Jerusalem. This is what the Lord says: “I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness.**

The metaphor of marriage is often used in the Old Testament to describe the relationship between God and Israel. This metaphor depicts a relationship of love, faithfulness and mutual commitment. In the beginning, Israel as a young bride was willing to follow God faithfully. They were in the wilderness then.

Comments by: Dr Tan Ee Yan



After God led Israel into the promised land – a fruitful land, they became prosperous. As time went on, they forgot it was God who had brought them to the land and it was God who had blessed them. They began to find the gods of other nations more attractive than their own God, who was the true and living God. So they began to worship these other gods who were worthless idols.

This is akin to Israel the bride having an affair. In this way they have broken the covenant (the promise) they made with God. The people of God are guilty of infidelity and unfaithfulness.

Comments by: Dr Tan Ee Yan



³ In those days Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of his children. All who harmed his people were declared guilty, and disaster fell on them. I, the Lord, have spoken!⁴ Listen to the word of the Lord, people of Jacob—all you families of Israel!
⁵ This is what the Lord says: “What did your ancestors find wrong with me that led them to stray so far from me? They worshiped worthless idols, only to become worthless themselves. (NLT)

⁷ “And when I brought you into a fruitful land to enjoy its bounty and goodness, you defiled my land and corrupted the possession I had promised you. ⁸ The priests did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord?’ Those who taught my word ignored me, the rulers turned against me, and the prophets spoke in the name of Baal, wasting their time on worthless idols. (NLT)

The Accusation of idolatry is then summarized:

Jeremiah 2:9 Therefore, I will bring my case against you,” says the Lord. “I will even bring charges against your children’s children in the years to come. ¹⁰ “Go west and look in the land of Cyprus; go east and search through the land of Kedar. Has anyone ever heard of anything as strange as this? ¹¹ Has any nation ever traded its gods for new ones, even though they are not gods at all?

Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols! ¹² The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay,” says the Lord. ¹³ “For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all! (NLT)

Jeremiah 2:22 No amount of soap or lye can make you clean. I still see the stain of your guilt. I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken!
²³ “You say, ‘That’s not true! I haven’t worshiped the images of Baal!’ But how can you say that? Go and look in any valley



Jeremiah telling the people to repent or they will face God's judgment

in the land! Face the awful sins you have done.

You are like a restless female camel desperately searching for a mate.²⁴ You are like a wild donkey, sniffing the wind at mating time. Who can restrain her lust? Those who desire her don't need to search, for she goes running to them! (NLT)

To make God's message sting in the hearts of the people, Jeremiah was given words which were sharp and would have been humiliating for people who cared about their covenant promises. However, the Jerusalemite leaders and people had become dulled to such accusations. They laughed at Jeremiah as he went through the streets of Jerusalem giving his message in public.

When they turned to idolatry, they not only broke their Covenant with God,

but as the illustrations used in Jeremiah's message are so personal, it showed how God's heart was pierced. Imagine how a husband or wife of an unfaithful spouse would feel.

Jeremiah 2:26 "Israel is like a thief who feels shame only when he gets caught. They, their kings, officials, priests, and prophets— all are alike in this.²⁷ To an image carved from a piece of wood they say, 'You are my father.' To an idol chiseled from a block of stone they say, 'You are my mother.' They turn their backs on me, but in times of trouble they cry out to me, 'Come and save us!'

²⁸ But why not call on these gods you have made? When trouble comes, let them save you if they can! For you have as many gods as there are towns in Judah. (NLT)

When Jeremiah began his ministry, the

northern kingdom called Israel had already been conquered and the people taken captive into Assyria. Judah had been spared. In 628 BC, Josiah was the king of Judah and initiated his earliest reforms (2 Chr 34:3). In 622 BC, while repairing the Temple, a book of the Law was discovered. This inspired Josiah to begin a spiritual reform that brought the people of Judah back to worshipping Yahweh. It was during this time that Jeremiah was called. Jeremiah finished delivering the accusations from God to Judah with a call to repentance. It was too late for the northern kingdom of Israel, but Judah could still repent and see the mercy of God.

Jeremiah 3:6 During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me, “Have you seen what fickle Israel has done? Like a wife who commits adultery, Israel has worshiped other gods on every hill and under every green tree. ⁷ I thought, ‘After she has done all this, she will return to me.’ But she did not return, and her faithless sister Judah saw this.

⁸ She saw that I divorced faithless Israel because of her adultery. But that treacherous sister Judah had no fear, and now she, too, has left me and given herself to prostitution. ⁹ Israel treated it all so lightly—she thought nothing of committing adultery by worshiping idols made of wood and stone. So now the land has been polluted. ¹⁰ But despite all this, her faithless sister Judah has never sincerely returned to me. She has only pretended to be sorry. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

¹¹ Then the Lord said to me, “Even faithless

Israel is less guilty than treacherous Judah!

¹² Therefore, go and give this message to Israel. This is what the Lord says: “O Israel, my faithless people, come home to me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever. ¹³ Only acknowledge your guilt. Admit that you rebelled against the Lord your God and committed adultery against him by worshiping idols under every green tree. Confess that you refused to listen to my voice. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

¹⁴ “Return home, you wayward children,” says the Lord, “for I am your master. I will bring you back to the land of Israel—one from this town and two from that family—from wherever you are scattered.

¹⁵ And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will guide you with knowledge and understanding. (NLT)

Jeremiah 3:22 “My wayward children,” says the Lord, “come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts.” “Yes, we’re coming,” the people reply, “for you are the Lord our God. ²³ Our worship of idols on the hills and our religious orgies on the mountains are a delusion. Only in the Lord our God will Israel ever find salvation.

²⁴ From childhood we have watched as everything our ancestors worked for—their flocks and herds, their sons and daughters—was squandered on a delusion.

²⁵ Let us now lie down in shame and cover ourselves with dishonor, for we and our ancestors have sinned against the Lord our God. From our childhood to this day we have never obeyed him.” (NLT)



Jeremiah telling the people to repent or they will face God's judgment

Jeremiah 4:1 “O Israel,” says the Lord, “if you wanted to return to me, you could. You could throw away your detestable idols and stray away no more.

² Then when you swear by my name, saying, ‘As surely as the Lord lives,’ you could do so with truth, justice, and righteousness. Then you would be a blessing to the nations of the world, and all people would come and praise my name.”

³ This is what the Lord says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: “Plow up the hard ground of your hearts! Do not waste your good seed among thorns. ⁴ O people of Judah and Jerusalem, surrender your pride and power. Change your hearts before the Lord, or my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire because of all your sins.

(NLT)

Jeremiah went about the streets of Jerusalem, speaking his message to anyone who would listen to him. Some people must have laughed at him, since he was only a young man, who was not from the city. They must have thought that he was someone who was seeking for attention.

After all, Josiah was on the throne and he had initiated repairs on the Temple and reforms to bring the people back to worship the LORD. The Assyrian Empire had weakened and left Judah with political freedom and a measure of prosperity. Who was this young upstart telling them to repent?

Besides, God describes the heart condition of the people of Judah: wayward, like hard ground and proud. They were so set in their ways and arrogant that they could not hear the truth in Jeremiah's message.

Lessons from the Story

1. Idolatry, the exchange of worshipping the true God for lifeless images is useless like digging water wells that leak. Today, we may not worship stone statues, but we are constantly tempted to prioritize worldly Key Performance Indicators like popularity, status, money, or chasing approval in social media above what is God's priorities for us.
2. Israel is described as an adulterous wife who leaves her husband for another. The betrayal of Judah not only breaks the covenant law, but is heart-breaking and personal to God. Our choices matter to God. He longs for us to stay close to Him because He loves us and has provided a way of salvation for us through faith in Jesus Christ.
3. Judah is called to repentance but a true repentance requires an about turn in their way of living and actions. God wants real change – a change of heart from the inside – not outward appearances or ritualistic actions for people to see.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did God remind them about their days in the desert when they came out of Egypt and into the land God promised their ancestors? What are some past events God may want to remind you of when you doubt or forget him?
2. What are some modern forms of idolatry? Why did God compare Judah to a wild donkey during mating time?
3. Why do you think God used strong images – like a wild donkey – to describe Judah's behaviour? What message was He sending? In the privacy of your heart, how do you think God would describe your actions today?
4. What does real repentance look like? What are some signs that someone is truly turning back to God – not just saying sorry or going through the motions for outward appearances? How could we be more sensitive (and not be hard-hearted) to God's word so that we can discern the changes and repentance that are needed in our lives?

CHAPTER 4

COMPLACENCY AND THE COMING JUDGMENT

REFERENCE: JEREMIAH 4:5 – 29; 5:12-18



The temple of Jerusalem being repaired under King Josiah

Although King Josiah had started repairing the Temple and calling the people to return to worshipping the LORD, many still kept their idols. Jeremiah warned them that if they did not truly repent and worship Yahweh, judgment was coming in the form of a northern invader.

Jeremiah 4:5 “Announce in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem and say:
‘Sound the trumpet throughout the land!’
Cry aloud and say: ‘Gather together! Let us flee to the fortified cities!’

⁶ Raise the signal to go to Zion! Flee for safety without delay! For I am bringing disaster from the north, even terrible destruction.”

⁷ A lion has come out of his lair; a destroyer of nations has set out. He has left his place to lay waste your land. Your towns will lie in ruins without inhabitant.

⁸ So put on sackcloth, lament and wail, for the fierce anger of the Lord has not turned away from us.

Around 622 BC, a significant shift in regional geo-politics was taking place. The Assyrian Empire—once

feared across the region—was crumbling. Seizing the moment, King Josiah of Judah pressed forward with sweeping reforms (2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 34:3). Fuelled by zeal for the Lord, he reclaimed territories once lost during King Hezekiah’s reign and purged them of every trace of pagan worship. Altars were torn down, idols smashed, and the land began to prosper again under the revival of God’s law.

While Josiah’s heart was genuine, not everyone in his court shared his desire

The Prophetess Huldah's answer to King Josiah



When Josiah discovered the book of the Law, he realized that Judah had sinned against God. He repented and initiated national reforms. He sent word to prophetess Huldah to ask the Lord what he should do. This was her answer to his

officers:

^{2 Kings 22:15} She said to them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶ “This is what the Lord says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people—all the curses written in the book that has been read in the presence of the king of Judah. ¹⁷ Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all that their hands have made, my anger will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.’ ¹⁸ Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: ¹⁹ Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the Lord. ²⁰ Now I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place and on those who live here.’” So they took her answer back to the king. ^(NIV)

for reforms. His court was filled with priests, prophets, and officers who had either grown complacent or acted on selfish interests. With Assyria weakening, they asked, “Who would dare attack us now?” The Temple in Jerusalem was being repaired, and sacrifices had resumed. Many believed the holy city was untouchable. “Surely,” they thought, “God would never let His beloved city fall.” The people had been lulled into a false sense of security.

But beneath this surface of revival, a deeper rot remained. Though Yahweh was worshipped publicly, the people’s hearts had not fully turned. Idolatry had not been

completely rooted out. Josiah had been told by the prophetess Huldah that since he was earnest in seeking God’s favour, judgment would not fall on Jerusalem during his lifetime. However, because the people had refused to repent for too long, punishment was inevitable, and Jerusalem would not be spared (2 Kings 22:15-20, 2 Chronicles 34:23-28).

Jeremiah continued: ^{Jeremiah 4:9} “In that day,” declares the Lord, “the king and the officials will lose heart, the priests will be horrified, and the prophets will be appalled.” ¹⁰ Then I said, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! How completely you have deceived

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this people and Jerusalem by saying, 'You will have peace,' when the sword is at our throats!"

¹¹ At that time this people and Jerusalem will be told, "A scorching wind from the barren heights in the desert blows toward my people, but not to winnow or cleanse; ¹² a wind too strong for that comes from me. Now I pronounce my judgments against them."

¹³ Look! He advances like the clouds, his chariots come like a whirlwind, his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us! We are ruined!

field, because she has rebelled against me," declares the Lord. ¹⁸ "Your own conduct and actions have brought this on you. This is your punishment. How bitter it is! How it pierces to the heart!" (NIV)

Jeremiah is not just a messenger in this prophecy. He takes his position also as one who is receiving the bad news. He stands with his people and feel their pain.

¹⁹ Oh, my anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain. Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent. For I have heard the sound of the trumpet; I have heard the battle cry. ²⁰

Disaster follows disaster; the whole land lies in ruins...

Jeremiah 4:27 This is what the Lord says: "The whole land will be ruined, though I will not destroy it completely. ²⁸ Therefore the earth will mourn and the heavens above grow dark, because I have spoken and will not relent, I have decided and will not turn back."



A besieging army is coming from a distant land

¹⁶ "Tell this to the nations, proclaim concerning Jerusalem: 'A besieging army is coming from a distant land, raising a war cry against the cities of Judah.

¹⁷ They surround her like men guarding a

²⁹ At the sound of horsemen and archers every town takes to flight. Some go into the thickets; some climb up among the rocks. All the towns are deserted; no one lives in them. ³⁰ What are you doing, you devastated one? Why dress yourself in

scarlet and put on jewels of gold? Why highlight your eyes with makeup? You adorn yourself in vain. Your lovers despise you; they want to kill you. (NIV)

Jeremiah's message was simple. The main reason for the coming disaster was because the people had deserted the LORD their God. No foreign alliances, no temple rituals, no empty sacrifices to false gods could shield them. The people were living a double life—offering worship in the temple while still bowing to idols. And God had seen it all. Judgment was coming.

Yet, within the royal court, Jeremiah's voice was drowned out by a chorus of false prophets. These palace advisors painted a rosy picture, assuring the people that everything was fine. "Look," they said, "the Temple is restored. The priests are back, offering sacrifices just as the Law commands. God would never let His holy city fall." But their words were lies. Their false sense of hope lulled the people into a dangerous complacency—unaware that a storm of judgment was silently building on the horizon. Yet, even then, God held it back. In His mercy, He was giving His people one final opportunity to turn from their sin and return to Him.

In 627 BC, the mighty Assyrian Empire was beginning to fracture. A rebellion had erupted in Babylon, forcing Assyria to recall its occupation forces from Judah and other outlying provinces to deal with the uprising. Back in Jerusalem, a false sense of security settled over the palace officials and temple priests.

Blinded by political events in the nations surrounding them, they turned a deaf ear to Jeremiah's message of warning. They were blind to the danger. Even if an enemy army approached, they reasoned, the LORD would surely protect Jerusalem—just as He had in the days of King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, when God miraculously wiped-out Sennacherib's invading forces (2 Kings 19:32-37).

Jeremiah's message contradicted this message of the ruling priests and false prophets. Therefore the people remained indifferent to Jeremiah's message and were unconcerned by warnings of judgment. The message of the false prophets was more attractive and comforting. Jeremiah

5:112 The people of Israel and the people of Judah have been utterly unfaithful to me," declares the Lord. ¹²They have lied about the Lord; they said, "He will do nothing! No harm will come to us; we will never see sword or famine. ¹³ The prophets are but wind and the word is not in them; so let what they say be done to them."

¹⁴ Therefore this is what the Lord God Almighty says: "Because the people have spoken these words, I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes. ¹⁵ People of Israel," declares the Lord, "I am bringing a distant nation against you— an ancient and enduring nation, a people whose language you do not know, whose speech you do not understand.

¹⁶ Their quivers are like an open grave; all of them are mighty warriors.

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¹⁷ They will devour your harvests and food, devour your sons and daughters; they will devour your flocks and herds, devour your vines and fig trees. With the sword they will destroy the fortified cities in which you trust.

^{6:19} Hear, you earth: I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law. ²⁰ What do I care about incense from Sheba or sweet calamus from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please me.” (NIV)

Jeremiah’s prophecy of judgment became even more explicit, as the people’s unbelief continued. They placed their trust in their fortified cities and their burnt offerings. These will be useless in the face of judgment. The advancing enemy will bring about mass destruction when they invade Judah.

But there is a small glimmer of hope. God will not completely destroy His people.

They would be punished, even exiled, but there was still hope for them.

^{5:18} “Yet even in those days,” declares the Lord, “I will not destroy you completely. ¹⁹ And when the people ask, ‘Why has the Lord our God done all this to us?’ you will tell them, ‘As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own.’” (NIV)

The message of Jeremiah was very unpopular and the people would not listen to him. While they showed an outward form of worship to the LORD because of King Josiah, their hearts were unmoved. Many of the people still clung to idol worship and committed horrific acts – including child sacrifice – things that were detestable to the LORD. Meanwhile, the world around Judah was in upheaval. Once-powerful empires were crumbling, while new threats were rising fast. In the midst of the storm, Judah stood vulnerable, yet unwilling to turn back to the God who could save them.

Lessons from the Story

1. There is a temporary withdrawal in the occupation forces. This lulls the Judahites into thinking that the prophet’s message of doom and gloom is exaggerated. Jeremiah’s message goes against the official and popular thinking that there was no imminent danger because surely, God was with them and would be on their side, protecting them. The prophet’s cries of danger and need for repentance is ignored. Today, outward success in career, social status, or looking spiritual in church, can lull us into thinking we are very close to God, but that is not enough. God wants us to surrender our hearts.

Lessons from the Story

2. False hope is dangerous. When everything seems to be fine, when false prophets told the Judahites “everything will be fine because the temple of God is here”, there is a temptation to disregard God’s warning of danger and call for repentance. Not everything that sounds positive or popular is true. Safer to stick to God’s Word even when it is difficult to accept.
3. Jeremiah is shown how terrible the judgment will be on Jerusalem and he feels the pain. The prophet is not just a messenger of the bad news, but also someone who receives and experiences the horror of the message.
4. Though punishment was certain, there is a glimmer of hope. There is always hope when we turn back to God – even if we have messed up badly in the past.

Discussion Questions

1. Jeremiah questions God: “Alas, Sovereign Lord! How completely you have deceived this people and Jerusalem by saying, ‘You will have peace,’ when the sword is at our throats!” (Jeremiah 4:10)
Why did Jeremiah question God in this manner? What should we do when things do not seem to match what we expect from God?
2. Why were the palace officials so confident that Jerusalem was safe from any enemy invader? What are some things today that give people a false sense of security – even when they are far from God?
3. How was Jeremiah’s message different from the popular messages of the time? Are there voices today that tell you “Everything is fine” even when it is not? How can you tell the difference between truth and a comfortable or convenient lie?
4. Even though judgment was coming, God still allowed a way for hope. What does that say about God’s character? How should that affect how we view His mercy and grace balanced with His justice today?

CHAPTER 5

THE TEMPLE SERMON OF JEREMIAH

JEREMIAH 7:1 – 32; 26:8 – 19



Jeremiah proclaiming God's message at the temple gate.

Early in the reign of Jehoiakim, son of King Josiah of Judah, the LORD instructed Jeremiah to deliver a very harsh and unpopular message to the priests and people at the temple gates.

Jeremiah 7:1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:² 'Stand at the gate of the Lord's house and there proclaim this message:
"Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord.

³ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place.
⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words and say, 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!'

⁵ If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly,
⁶ if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm,

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⁷ then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave to your ancestors for ever and ever.

⁸ But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

⁹ “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, ‘We are safe’— safe to do all these detestable things?

¹¹ Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord. (NIVUK)

Den of Robbers

Jesus used the same term in Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, and Luke 19:46

According to some commentaries (TTT – Teach The Text p.47), a Den of Robbers refers to a hide-out or sanctuary where evil doers can hide. Jeremiah was calling the false prophets and palace officers evil-doers who were hiding in what they thought was a place of protection i.e. the Temple, when in fact, God could see all their sins and was bringing judgment on them.

The Temple had become an outward sign of God’s presence and favour on Jerusalem. Due to the understanding that the Temple was God’s dwelling place, people had come to believe that the Temple (and Jerusalem) was inviolable. God had indeed chosen Jerusalem and desires to dwell

The palace priests listening to Jeremiah would have countered Jeremiah’s words by quoting the words of Isaiah when the Assyrian king, Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem during the time of King Hezekiah. In that time, Isaiah spoke these words to King Hezekiah.

Isaiah 37:33 ‘Therefore this is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. ³⁴ By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city,’ declares the Lord.

³⁵ ‘I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!’ (NIVUK)

Other priests would have quoted from the Psalms. Psalms 46:4 A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. ⁵ God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. (NLT)

with His people (1 Kings 8:10-13; Psalm 46:4; Psalm 132:13-18). However, in their misguided understanding, the people treated the Temple like a talisman that had powers of protection.

Furthermore, Isaiah once promised the safety of Jerusalem when Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem (701 BC) (Isaiah 37:33). Again, in their misguided understanding, this incident continued to serve as a testament of God’s perpetual protection of Jerusalem, up until Jeremiah’s day, about 100 years later. There was an erroneous assumption that as long as the

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Temple was in Jerusalem, God would not let the city be captured.

In the meantime, God does not and will not tolerate covenantal unfaithfulness and unrighteous living. True worship involves repentance from idolatry and turning away from their wicked practices. As important as the Temple was for the worship of God, and as beloved as Jerusalem was to God, God would still bring judgment on the city for their idolatry and corruption. This message was unpopular and would put Jeremiah at risk of persecution very soon.

Jeremiah reminded them that Shiloh, although it was the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant and a place where the people came to make sacrifices, was now laid to waste.

Jeremiah 7:12 “Go now to the place at Shiloh where I once put the Tabernacle that bore my name. See what I did there because of all the wickedness of my people, the Israelites. ¹³ While you were doing these wicked things, says the Lord, I spoke to you about it repeatedly, but you would not listen. I called out to you, but you refused to answer.

¹⁴ So just as I destroyed Shiloh, I will now destroy this Temple that bears my name, this Temple that you trust in for help, this place that I gave to you and your ancestors. ¹⁵ And I will send you out of my sight into exile, just as I did your relatives, the people of Israel.’

Jeremiah himself was horrified at the

words God had given him. Would God destroy this temple? All his life, Jeremiah had observed the priests serving in the temple. His home village was dedicated to priests. His father was a priest. The Temple of Jerusalem was the symbol of God’s presence in their midst.

But if the people would not turn from their idolatry and wicked practices, then the temple could not save them from destruction and exile. Jehoiakim had allowed pagan altars to be built within the temple courtyard. Some even practiced child sacrifice in the surrounding hills of Jerusalem.

“Heretic! Blasphemer!” the priests would have shouted at him, “this man speaks against the prophets!” The crowd became very agitated; “he is a false prophet,” they accused Jeremiah, and the situation looked dangerous but Jeremiah continued speaking.

**The full judgment can be read in
Jeremiah**
Jeremiah chapter 7 and 8.



Jeremiah 7:16 “Pray no more for these people, Jeremiah. Do not weep or pray for them, and don’t beg me to help them, for I will not listen to you. ¹⁷ Don’t you see what they are doing throughout the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

¹⁸ No wonder I am so angry! Watch how the children gather wood and the fathers build sacrificial fires. See how the women

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knead dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. And they pour out liquid offerings to their other idol gods!

¹⁹ Am I the one they are hurting?” asks the Lord. “Most of all, they hurt themselves, to their own shame.”

²⁰ So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “I will pour out my terrible fury on this place. Its people, animals, trees, and crops will be consumed by the unquenchable fire of my anger.”

²¹ This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: “Take your burnt offerings and your other sacrifices and eat them yourselves! ²² When I led your ancestors out of Egypt, it was not burnt offerings and sacrifices I wanted from them. ²³ This is what I told them: ‘Obey me, and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Do everything as I say, and all will be well!’

²⁴ “But my people would not listen to me. They kept doing whatever they wanted, following the stubborn desires of their evil hearts. They went backward instead of forward. ²⁵ From the day your ancestors left Egypt until now, I have continued to send my servants, the prophets—day in and day out.

²⁹ Shave your head in mourning, and weep alone on the mountains. For the Lord has rejected and forsaken this generation that has provoked his fury.’

³⁰ “The people of Judah have sinned before my very eyes,” says the Lord. “They have set up their abominable idols right in the

Temple that bears my name, defiling it.

³¹ They have built pagan shrines at Topheth, the garbage dump in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, and there they burn their sons and daughters in the fire. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing!

³² So beware, for the time is coming,” says the Lord, “when that garbage dump will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. They will bury the bodies in Topheth until there is no more room for them. (NLT)

The response of the crowd is recorded in chapter 26.

Jeremiah 26:8 But when Jeremiah had finished his message, saying everything the Lord had told him to say, the priests and prophets and all the people at the Temple mobbed him. “Kill him!” they shouted.

⁹ “What right do you have to prophesy in the Lord’s name that this Temple will be destroyed like Shiloh? What do you mean, saying that Jerusalem will be destroyed and left with no inhabitants?” And all the people threatened him as he stood in front of the Temple. (NLT)

As the mob surrounding Jeremiah grew more violent and were about to beat him up, news of this riot reached the palace. Some officials rushed over and took control of the situation. The priests and false prophets accused Jeremiah of being a traitor for prophesying against the city. Jeremiah’s message was seditious and

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dangerous. His message of doom and gloom could cause the people to flee, and this would help the enemies to capture the city.

But Jeremiah defended himself by saying that his message was from the LORD.

Jeremiah 26:14 As for me, I am in your hands—do with me as you think best. ¹⁵ But if you kill me, rest assured that you will be killing an innocent man! The responsibility for such a deed will lie on you, on this city, and on every person living in it. For it is absolutely true that the Lord sent me to speak every word you have heard.”

The officials became scared when they heard this. ¹⁶ Then the officials and the people said to the priests and prophets, “This man does not deserve the death sentence, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.” *(NLT)*

One of the elders in the crowd spoke up and reminded the crowd about a time when Micah prophesied during the reign of King Hezekiah: “Jerusalem will be in ruins! A thicket will grow on the heights

of Mount Zion where the Temple now stands.”

Jeremiah 26:19 But did King Hezekiah and the people kill him for saying this? No, they turned from their sins and worshiped the Lord. They begged him for mercy. Then the Lord changed his mind about the terrible disaster he had pronounced against them. So we are about to do ourselves great harm.” *(NLT)*

Another influential person, Ahikam son of Shaphan also spoke up to defend Jeremiah. The officials then ordered the crowd not to harm Jeremiah and released him. But he could no longer speak publicly in Jerusalem as many people in the city wanted to have him silenced. His life was in constant danger.

Facing rejection and death threats, Jeremiah must have felt very tired and dejected. He returned to Anathoth, his home village and stayed there for some time, hoping to find peace and restoration. Perhaps the LORD would let him settle down and start a family. But there was a surprise in store for him.

Lessons from the Story

1. The people thought that as long as they showed up at the temple and went through with the religious rites, they were safe. But Jeremiah reminded them that God wants changed hearts and faith that leads to obedience, not just religious rituals. Jeremiah warned them against insincere worship and religious hypocrisy. The people cannot ignore His commandments and just rely on ritual sacrifices and the Temple to save them. Today, just showing up at church or saying Christian-sounding words can also tempt us to think that this is enough – when what God desires from us is real faith that leads to obedience.

Lessons from the Story

2. The tabernacle which symbolizes the presence of God, was in Shiloh for over 360 years. Because the people disobeyed God, Shiloh now lies in ruins. God will do the same for Jerusalem and the Temple if the people continued in their sinful ways. God tells Jeremiah to stop praying for the people because they have stubbornly rejected Him for too long. Today, we are reminded that God's patience has a limit when there is no real repentance.
3. Wicked people plot to kill Jeremiah, but God sends righteous people at the right time to rescue Jeremiah just as He had promised when Jeremiah was first called to the ministry. ^{Jeremiah 1:19} **They will fight you, but they will fail. For I am with you, and I will take care of you.** (NLT)

Discussion Questions

1. In what way do you think the events in King Hezekiah and Isaiah's time when the Assyrians besieged Jerusalem, would have influenced the people?
2. Why did Jeremiah remind the people about what happened to Shiloh? What is the lesson for us today?
3. Why did Jeremiah say the Temple had become a "den of robbers?" What can we learn from this?
4. How did God protect Jeremiah from the mob? How does this story encourage you to trust in God in difficult situations like standing up alone for something that is right?
5. Why do you think God told Jeremiah to stop praying for the people? What does that say about how seriously God takes sin and the refusal to repent?

CHAPTER 6

THE DEATH OF KING JOSIAH

2 CHRONICLES 35:20 – 26; JEREMIAH 22:10 – 18

We now turn our attention to the major world events that were unfolding at the time—events that were dramatically reshaping the ancient Middle East and setting the stage for the next chapter of Jeremiah’s story.

In 627 BC, the mighty Assyrian Empire began to crumble with the death of its last strong ruler, King Ashurbanipal. His death triggered internal strife and civil war, as oppressed nations under Assyrian control saw a chance to break free from the burden of heavy taxes and harsh rule.

Just a year later, in 626 BC, a bold move changed history—King Nabopolassar of Babylon declared independence from Assyria and founded what would become the powerful Neo-Babylonian Empire.

In 614 BC, Babylon joined forces with the Medes (from what is now Iran) and launched attacks deep into Assyrian territory. That same year, the ancient city of Asshur—once the religious heart of the Assyrian empire—fell to the Medes. Then came the biggest blow. In 612 BC, the great capital Nineveh was besieged and destroyed by the combined Babylonian and Median armies, led by King Nabopolassar himself.

Assyria’s fall was no longer a question of *if*, but *when*—and Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry was unfolding right in the middle of this massive geopolitical shift.

Fall of Nineveh

Prophet Nahum had prophesied the fall of Nineveh and described its destruction in his book.

Nahum 3:1 “Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims.” (NIV)



Neo-Babylonian Empire

This was the second time Babylon rose to become a super-power in the region.

Old Babylonian Empire

- 1894 - 1595 BC
- Rose to prominence under King Hammurabi (1792 – 1750 BC)
- Fell to Hittites

Neo-Babylonian Empire

- 626 – 539 BC
- Peaked under King Nebuchadnezzar II who built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon
- Fell to the Persians

As the Assyrian empire crumbled, its surviving forces regrouped in the city of Haran, desperate to keep their empire alive. But they could not do it alone. They sent out a call for help—and Egypt answered.

THE DEATH OF KING JOSIAH



612 BC *The Assyrians were defeated and their capital Nineveh captured by King Nabopolassar*

Around 610 BC, Pharaoh Neco marched out with his army to support the Assyrians. His motive was strategic: he did not want to see Babylon rising too fast or growing too powerful. If Assyria fell completely, Babylon would become the new superpower—and Egypt might be next in their path.

When Josiah heard the news of King Neco advancing to assist the Assyrians, he became anxious. Why should Assyria be saved? Judah was enjoying a period of peace and independence since the Assyrians had become weak. Why should they become strong again? Josiah made the fatal decision – to intercept the Egyptian army and stop them from helping the

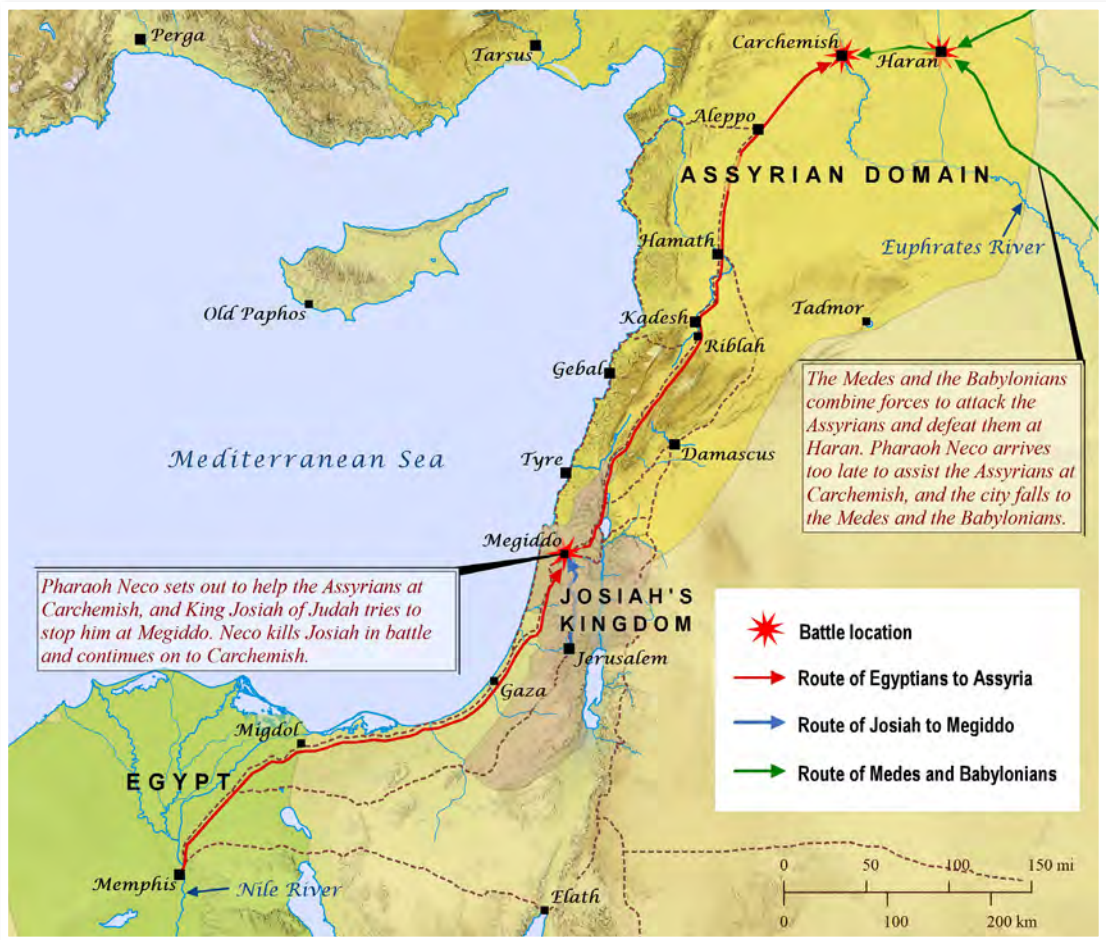
Assyrians. The two armies met in 609 BC while Neco was on his way to Harran. It was a move that would change the course of Judah's history.

2 Chronicles 35:20 After Josiah had finished restoring the Temple, King Neco of Egypt led his army up from Egypt to do battle at Carchemish on the Euphrates River, and Josiah and his army marched out to fight him.

21 But King Neco sent messengers to Josiah with this message: “What do you want with me, king of Judah? I have no quarrel with you today! I am on my way to fight another nation, and God has told me to hurry! Do not interfere with God, who is with me, or he will destroy you.”

THE DEATH OF KING JOSIAH

Map of Josiah's battle with Pharaoh Neco of Egypt



Source: Bible Mapper Atlas <https://biblemapper.com/blog/index.php/2020/11/13/josiah-battles-neco/>

²² But Josiah refused to listen to Neco, to whom God had indeed spoken, and he would not turn back. Instead, he disguised himself and led his army into battle on the plain of Megiddo. ²³ But the enemy archers hit King Josiah with their arrows and wounded him. He cried out to his men, "Take me from the battle, for I am badly wounded!"

²⁴ So they lifted Josiah out of his chariot

and placed him in another chariot. Then they brought him back to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried there in the royal cemetery. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him. ²⁵ The prophet Jeremiah composed funeral songs for Josiah, and to this day choirs still sing these sad songs about his death. These songs of sorrow have become a tradition and are recorded in The Book of Laments.

THE DEATH OF KING JOSIAH

²⁶ The rest of the events of Josiah's reign and his acts of devotion (carried out according to what was written in the Law of the Lord), ²⁷ from beginning to end—all are recorded in *The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah*. (NLT)



Jeremiah mourns the passing of Josiah the last righteous king of Judah

Jeremiah must have felt terribly sad and lonely when he heard of Josiah's death. Why did God take away the last righteous king of Judah in such an untimely manner? Josiah was committed to following God, even if many of his court officers did not. Who was left in the palace now who would listen to Jeremiah?

After Josiah's death, the people anointed Shallum, a son of Josiah, to be the king of Judah and he took the name of Jehoahaz. He was 23 years old when he became king.

He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. He ruled Judah for only 3 months.

The Assyrian-Egyptian alliance failed to recapture Harran. The Assyrians were driven further north making their territory smaller. Neco returned south but on his

way home, he stopped by Judah to assert his new authority. Neco ordered Judah to surrender their king, Jehoahaz, and imposed on Judah a heavy levy of tribute to be paid. Neco made Eliakim, another son of Josiah, king in place of his father Josiah and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Then he took Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt where he died (Ref: 2 Kings 23 31-34).

Jeremiah heard or even witnessed the sad

procession, when Judah's king was taken out of Jerusalem as a captive to be exiled in Egypt. He witnessed all these events, the powerplay of the Egyptians, the rise of the Babylonians, the disobedience of his own people, and knew that his prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction was soon coming true.

Jehoiakim did not follow the good example of his father Josiah, but did evil in the sight of the LORD. He was 25 years old when he was appointed king and he ruled 11 years. Jehoiakim forced the people of

THE DEATH OF KING JOSIAH

Judah to pay higher taxes, so that he could give Neco the silver and gold that he had demanded while he cared only to build a luxurious palace for himself and treated the people in an unjust manner.

Jeremiah wrote: *A Message about Jehoahaz*

Jeremiah 22:10 Do not weep for the dead king or mourn his loss.

Instead, weep for the captive king being led away!

For he will never return to see his native land again.

¹¹ For this is what the Lord says about Jehoahaz, who succeeded his father, King Josiah, and was taken away as a captive: “He will never return. ¹² He will die in a distant land and will never again see his own country.”

A Message about Jehoiakim

Jeremiah 22:13 And the Lord says, “What sorrow awaits Jehoiakim, who builds his palace with forced labor. He builds injustice into its walls, for he makes his neighbors work for nothing. He does not pay them for their labor.

¹⁴ He says, ‘I will build a magnificent palace with huge rooms and many windows. I will panel it throughout with fragrant cedar and paint it a lovely red.’

¹⁵ But a beautiful cedar palace does not make a great king! Your father, Josiah, also had plenty to eat and drink. But he was just and right in all his dealings. That is why God blessed him.

¹⁶ He gave justice and help to the poor and needy, and everything went well for him. Isn’t that what it means to know me?” says the Lord. ¹⁷ “But you! You have eyes only for greed and dishonesty! You murder the innocent, oppress the poor, and reign ruthlessly.”

¹⁸ Therefore, this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim, son of King Josiah: “The people will not mourn for him, crying to one another, ‘Alas, my brother! Alas, my sister!’ His subjects will not mourn for him, crying, ‘Alas, our master is dead! Alas, his splendor is gone!’ ¹⁹ He will be buried like a dead donkey— dragged out of Jerusalem and dumped outside the gates!

(NLT)

Jeremiah warns them about their reliance on allies instead of God’s word spoken through Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 22:20 Weep for your allies in Lebanon. Shout for them in Bashan. Search for them in the regions east of the river. See, they are all destroyed.

Not one is left to help you. ²¹ I warned you when you were prosperous, but you replied, ‘Don’t bother me.’ You have been that way since childhood— you simply will not obey me!

²² And now the wind will blow away your allies. All your friends will be taken away as captives. Surely then you will see your wickedness and be ashamed.

²³ It may be nice to live in a beautiful palace paneled with wood from the cedars of Lebanon, but soon you will groan with

THE DEATH OF KING JOSIAH

pangs of anguish— anguish like that of a woman in labor. ^(NLT)

Jeremiah's message was very unpopular—especially among the king's officials and the so-called prophets who surrounded him. While the court prophets spoke smooth, comforting words that reassured the king everything would be fine, Jeremiah delivered warnings of judgment, destruction, and exile. He was bold, unfiltered, and not officially recognized as one of the "prophets" on the royal payroll. To many, he was a nuisance. To some, a traitor. He was a marked man. The people believed they were safe. This

was Solomon's Temple, after all—the grand house of God in Jerusalem. Surely, as long as the Temple stood and the priests continued offering sacrifices, God's presence would remain with them. Jerusalem could not fall. The LORD would not allow the Temple to be destroyed. That was the belief they clung to—a false sense of security.

But Jeremiah saw through the ritual. Behind the temple walls, many had already turned to pagan gods, bowing to statues and offering incense to foreign deities. Outward religion had replaced obedience to the Covenant.

Lessons from the Story

1. King Josiah loved God and led his nation in reforms. However, his last action, going into battle without seeking God's direction, cost him his life. Even when our intentions are good, we still need to seek God's guidance before we act. A passionate heart needs wise guidance.
2. Josiah's son, Jehoiakim, cared more about wealth and status than justice. He taxed the people heavily, built a luxurious palace for himself, and ignored God's Word. God sees how leaders treat others. Our actions reflect our belief in God and what He wants of us.
3. The people felt secure because the temple still stood and sacrifices continued. But their hearts had turned from God. They were even made sacrifices to idols and foreign gods. Outward religion can never replace inner obedience. God wants hearts that truly follow Him – not just people who look religious.
4. God keeps His Word – both the blessing and the warning. Josiah died in peace with God, just as the prophetess Huldah said. But everything else Jeremiah warned about – the exile, the downfall of Judah – started happening right after. God's Word can be trusted to be fulfilled.

THE DEATH OF KING JOSIAH

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think King Josiah decided to fight Pharaoh Neco? Have you ever rushed into something without spending time to ask God first and reflect on His answer? What are some ways you can practice asking for God's guidance before making decisions?
2. What message was Jeremiah giving to the people by the lament that he wrote for the death of King Josiah?
3. How do you think Jeremiah felt as he watched everything fall apart?
Josiah—the last godly king—was gone. His son Jehoahaz was dragged off to Egypt in chains, and Pharaoh handpicked Jehoiakim to rule as a puppet king. Judah was no longer free—it was a vassal state, its throne controlled by a foreign empire. And yet, even under judgment, the leaders of Judah clung to their idols, their greed, and their corrupt ways. What can Jeremiah's perseverance teach us about staying faithful in difficult times?
4. Why was Jehoiakim so different from his father Josiah? What does this tell us about how power, greed, or popularity can change people?
5. What does Jeremiah's warning about "false security" teach us today? Are there things that we rely on today like money, status, even church routines, that give us a false sense of peace? What does it really mean to be right with God?

CHAPTER 7

JEREMIAH FACES REJECTION AND BETRAYAL AT HOME

REFERENCE: JEREMIAH 11:18 – 12:7; 16:1 – 4; 26: 2 – 11



Jeremiah returns home to Anathoth

What happened after Jeremiah returned to Anathoth, his home village? The story at this point is not told chronologically, nor in narrative form. Bible scholars are only able to piece the events through the words recorded in his prophetic sayings.

Anathoth was not just any village. It had been set apart as a city for priests since the days of Joshua (Joshua 21:18), a place where the descendants of Aaron lived and

served. Jeremiah had grown up among these priests. But after the uproar caused by his bold Temple Sermon in Jerusalem, his reputation followed him. To many of the priests in Anathoth, he was no longer one of them. He was a threat—a prophet stirring up trouble.

Jeremiah thought he would be accepted in his home village, that he could find rest and comfort in his family home and perhaps even settle down. But he was in for a surprise. As he continued to warn the people that judgment was coming unless the people of Judah repented, he found that his home village and even his own family had turned against him.

The most painful part? It was not just rejection. God revealed to him that some of the very people he had grown up with wanted him dead. To be hunted not by enemies, but by those closest to him, must have cut deeply. Anathoth, the place he once called home, became a place of betrayal.

Jeremiah 11:18 Then the Lord told me about the plots my enemies were making against me. ¹⁹ I was like a lamb being led to the slaughter. I had no idea that they were

planning to kill me! “Let’s destroy this man and all his words,” they said. “Let’s cut him down, so his name will be forgotten forever.”

²⁰ O Lord of Heaven’s Armies, you make righteous judgments, and you examine the deepest thoughts and secrets. Let me see your vengeance against them, for I have committed my cause to you.

²¹ This is what the Lord says about the men of Anathoth who wanted me dead. They had said, “We will kill you if you do not stop prophesying in the Lord’s name.”²² So this is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says about them: “I will punish them! Their young men will die in battle, and their boys and girls will starve to death.”²³ Not one of these plotters from Anathoth will survive, for I will bring disaster upon them when their time of punishment comes.”^(NLT)

Knowing that his own village and even his family members have plotted against him tormented Jeremiah. Overwhelmed with sorrow and confusion, Jeremiah poured out his heart to God. From the deepest part of his soul, he cried out—not just in fear, but in anguish, searching for comfort, justice, and understanding.

^{Jeremiah 12:1} You are always righteous, Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?

² You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit.

You are always on their lips but far from their hearts.³ Yet you know me, Lord; you see me and test my thoughts about you. Drag them off like sheep to be butchered! Set them apart for the day of slaughter!

⁴ How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, ‘He will not see what happens to us.’^(NIVUK)

Then God answers Jeremiah: ^{Jeremiah 12:5} ‘If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?’

⁶ Your relatives, members of your own family – even they have betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you. Do not trust them, though they speak well of you.
⁷ ‘I will forsake my house, abandon my inheritance; I will give the one I love into the hands of her enemies.’^(NIVUK)

Just like Jeremiah who feels deeply hurt by the betrayal of his own family, God is deeply wounded by the betrayal of His chosen people.

God instructed Jeremiah not to marry nor to have children. This was a prophetic symbolic act to reflect the death and destruction that will soon befall the people of Judah. There was no future for them, therefore why marry and have a family? Families would only grieve when parents and children fall victim to impending war

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and the resulting famines and diseases the nation will suffer.

Jeremiah 16:1 **The Lord gave me another message. He said,** ² “Do not get married or have children in this place. ³ For this is what the Lord says about the children born here in this city and about their mothers and fathers: ⁴ They will die from terrible diseases. No one will mourn for them or bury them, and they will lie scattered on the ground like manure. They will die from war and famine, and their bodies will be food for the vultures and wild animals.”

(NLT)

Just as Jeremiah felt the sting of rejection—even from his own family—God, too, grieved over the betrayal of His beloved nation. The prophet’s celibacy and loneliness portrayed was not in vain; it echoed God’s own heartache, calling Judah to repentance through a life lived in faithful, costly obedience. Jeremiah’s pain was not just personal—it was prophetic.

The prophet’s celibacy and loneliness portrays the desolation Judah will experience. God also prohibited mourning and rejoicing. Jeremiah was not to mourn because such events were an act of God. He shall not rejoice, because there will be nothing to rejoice over.

Comments by: Dr Tan Ee Yan

Jeremiah 16:5 **This is what the Lord says:** “Do not go to funerals to mourn and show sympathy for these people, for I have removed my protection and peace from them. I have taken away my unfailing love

and my mercy. ⁶ Both the great and the lowly will die in this land. No one will bury them or mourn for them. . .

⁸ “And do not go to their feasts and parties. Do not eat and drink with them at all. ⁹ For this is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: In your own lifetime, before your very eyes, I will put an end to the happy singing and laughter in this land. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard.

¹⁰ “When you tell the people all these things, they will ask, ‘Why has the Lord decreed such terrible things against us? What have we done to deserve such treatment? What is our sin against the Lord our God?’

¹¹ “Then you will give them the Lord’s reply: ‘It is because your ancestors were unfaithful to me. They worshiped other gods and served them. They abandoned me and did not obey my word.

¹² And you are even worse than your ancestors! You stubbornly follow your own evil desires and refuse to listen to me. ¹³ So I will throw you out of this land and send you into a foreign land where you and your ancestors have never been. There you can worship idols day and night—and I will grant you no favors!’ (NLT)

But Jeremiah is confident in the LORD. Despite the terrible judgment coming, he trusts that God has a plan for all who trust in Him. He ends his message with this prayer:

Jeremiah 16:19 **Lord, you are my strength and**

fortress, my refuge in the day of trouble!
Nations from around the world will come
to you and say,
“Our ancestors left us a foolish heritage,
for they worshiped worthless idols.

²⁰ Can people make their own gods? These are not real gods at all!” ²¹ The Lord says, “Now I will show them my power; now I will show them my might. At last they will know and understand that I am the Lord.

(NLT)

The Fall of Assyria and the Rise of the Babylonian Empire

After the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC, the decline of the Assyrian Empire accelerated. They were defeated by the Babylonians in Megiddo, and even with the help of the Egyptians, they failed to stop the Babylonians in Harran in 609 BC. What remained of the once great Assyrian Empire retreated to Carchemish, a city under Egyptian control. Egypt saw Babylon as a potential threat from the north and sought to block them from becoming stronger.

In Judah, the court of King Jehoiakim grew more confident that they were safe from any invaders. Jeremiah had long warned of a coming invader from the north, a terrifying force sent by God. But the king’s officials and false prophets had assumed this to refer to Assyria. Now, with Assyria all but wiped out and Egypt standing guard in the north, they believed Jeremiah’s prophecies have been debunked.

But they were wrong, because they had

overlooked Babylon. Rising quickly and fiercely under the command of a young warrior prince—Nebuchadnezzar—the new northern empire was on the move. Jeremiah’s prophecy was far from disproven. In fact, it was only just beginning to unfold.

In 605 BC, led by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians and the remnants of the Assyrians, driving the Egyptians back to where they came from. The Battle of Carchemish marked the final blow to the Assyrian Empire. After the battle, Assyria ceased to exist as a political entity. Egypt lost its foothold in the Middle East and Pharaoh Neco’s ambitions to control the former Assyrian territories were shattered.

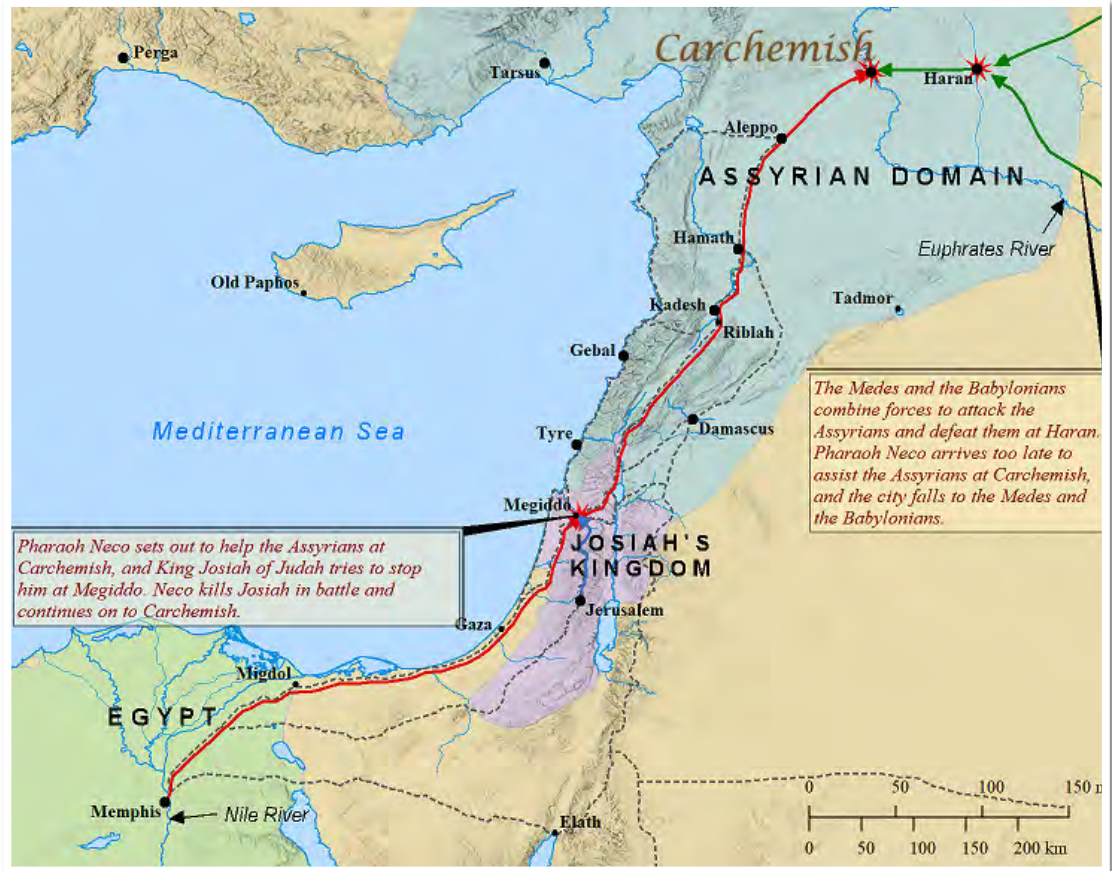
Egypt, greatly weakened by the defeat at Carchemish, retreated to its own border and was no longer able to dominate or influence Judah and its surrounding nations. Babylon was now the new superpower and overlord of the region. In fact, Babylon was the northern invader that Jeremiah had prophesied.

God had given a message to Jeremiah about Egypt.

Jeremiah 46:2 This message concerning Egypt was given in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, the king of Judah, on the occasion of the battle of Carchemish when Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, and his army were defeated beside the Euphrates River by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

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Map of the Battle of Carchemish



³ “Prepare your shields, and advance into battle! ⁴ Harness the horses, and mount the stallions. Take your positions. Put on your helmets. Sharpen your spears, and prepare your armor.

⁵ But what do I see? The Egyptian army flees in terror. The bravest of its fighting men run without a backward glance. They are terrorized at every turn,” says the Lord.

⁶ “The swiftest runners cannot flee; the mightiest warriors cannot escape. By the Euphrates River to the north, they stumble and fall.

⁷ “Who is this, rising like the Nile at floodtime, overflowing all the land?

⁸ It is the Egyptian army, overflowing all the land, boasting that it will cover the earth like a flood, destroying cities and their people.

⁹ Charge, you horses and chariots; attack, you mighty warriors of Egypt!

Come, all you allies from Ethiopia, Libya, and Lydia who are skilled with the shield and bow! ¹⁰ For this is the day of the Lord, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, a day of vengeance on his enemies. The sword will

devour until it is satisfied, yes, until it is drunk with your blood! The Lord, the Lord of Heaven's Armies, will receive a sacrifice today in the north country beside the Euphrates River.

¹¹ "Go up to Gilead to get medicine, O virgin daughter of Egypt! But your many treatments will bring you no healing. ¹² The nations have heard of your shame. The earth is filled with your cries of despair. Your mightiest warriors will run into each other and fall down together."

(NLT)

The old northern empire – Assyria – had fallen. Egypt the mighty power from the south, had also suffered defeat. The stage of history was shifting. Rising like a storm from the north, a new unexpected force was building up. Now, the words of Jeremiah, once mocked and dismissed, were beginning to come true. The northern invader he had warned about was not the fading empire of the past. It was a new power, stronger and fiercer than any before. Judgment was on the horizon.

Lessons from the Story

1. Jeremiah is warned by God that his home village and even his own family are plotting to kill him. This is especially heart-breaking for the prophet and in his despair, he asks God for justice. Faithfulness to God may come with rejection and loneliness but loyalty to God is more important.
2. God prepares us for greater challenges. When Jeremiah cried out in pain, God's reply to him was to be patient. What he was facing now was only a small obstacle compared to the challenges ahead. It was only a warm-up exercise for the greater task coming.
3. Jeremiah's life was a living message. God tells Jeremiah not to get married and have children because of the coming disaster. His life is also to demonstrate to Judah the coming judgment. Sometimes God calls us to sacrifice comfort so our lives can point others to God's truth.
4. God feels the pain of rejection too. Jeremiah's heartbreak mirrors God's own grief. The people had turned away from Him, choosing idols over their relationship with the One who loved them most. God is not distant and impersonal – He feels deeply when we ignore or reject Him.

Lessons from the Story

5. As the Assyrian Empire collapses, the rulers of Judah ignore Jeremiah's warning. Instead of trusting God's word, they rely on their own judgment and choose to ally with Egypt. But Egypt cannot save them. They do not realize that God's word is not affected by short-term events. This teaches us to trust God's Word even when it goes against popular opinion or seems out of step with present circumstances.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the people of Jeremiah's home village Anathoth, and even his own family, wanted to kill him, and even to erase his name? What does this tell us about standing up for your faith or values in the face of rejection?
2. How do we respond when God's plan looks different from our dreams? What can we learn from Jeremiah about trusting God's plan, especially when life does not go the way we expected? Can you think of a time when God asked you to let go of something for a bigger purpose? What did you learn?
3. Why do you think people trusted Egypt instead of God? What are some 'modern Egypts' that people put their hope in today instead of God?
4. What does Jeremiah's prayer in 16:19-21 reveal about his confidence in God, even in dark times? How can we build and hold on to that kind of trust today?

CHAPTER 8

JEREMIAH CONFRONTS KING JEHOIAKIM AND HIS FALSE PROPHETS

JEREMIAH 13:1 – 14; 18:1 – 9; 26:4 – 32; 36:4 – 31; 15:10 – 21

c. 605 BC

Jeremiah's life was anything but easy. He was not just rejected by ordinary people – he was targeted by the king, his officials, and even betrayed by his own family. Why did God give him such a difficult task? From a young age, he was called to confront the priests, the false prophets and even the king with the truth they did not want to hear. The only friend he had, the righteous King Josiah, was now dead and his sons returned to the evil ways of their ancestors. They performed the Temple rituals but also bowed to Baal and other false gods.

Yet in the face of danger and isolation, Jeremiah refused to stay silent. Empowered by God, he stepped into the streets of Jerusalem and spoke boldly. God even gave him powerful visual signs to act out—vivid, dramatic scenes that warned the people of what was coming if they refused to turn back.

Jeremiah's life was in danger

Jehoiakim executed prophets who spoke against Jerusalem. Jeremiah's life was in danger. Refer to Jeremiah 26:20-23 for the story of another prophet, Uriah son of Shemaiah who gave a similar message as Jeremiah. King Jehoiakim executed Uriah. But the LORD had protected Jeremiah and spared his life.



Prophesying with Visual Symbols A Linen Belt

Jeremiah 13:1 This is what the Lord said to me: 'Go and buy a linen belt and put it round your waist, but do not let it touch water.'² So I bought a belt, as the Lord directed, and put it round my waist.³ Then the word of the Lord came to me a second time:⁴ 'Take the belt you bought and are wearing round your waist, and go now to Perath and hide it there in a crevice in the rocks.'⁵ So I went and hid it at Perath, as the Lord told me.

⁶ Many days later the Lord said to me, 'Go now to Perath and get the belt I told you to hide there.'⁷ So I went to Perath and dug up the belt and took it from the place where I had hidden it, but now it was ruined and completely useless.

⁸ Then the word of the Lord came to me:⁹ 'This is what the Lord says: "In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem."¹⁰ These wicked

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people, who refuse to listen to my words, who follow the stubbornness of their hearts and go after other gods to serve and worship them, will be like this belt – completely useless!

¹¹ For as a belt is bound round the waist, so I bound all the people of Israel and all the people of Judah to me,” declares the Lord, “to be my people for my renown and praise and honour. But they have not listened.”

(NIVUK)

Wineskins

Jeremiah 13:12 ‘Say to them: “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: every wineskin should be filled with wine.” And if they say to you, “Don’t we know that every wineskin should be filled with wine?”’¹³ then tell them, “This is what the Lord says: I am going to fill with drunkenness all who live in this land, including the kings who sit on David’s throne, the priests, the prophets and all those living in Jerusalem.¹⁴ I will

smash them one against the other, parents and children alike, declares the Lord. I will allow no pity or mercy or compassion to keep me from destroying them.” (NIVUK)

Perath

Perath is a small town not far from Jerusalem and only 5 kilometres northeast of Jeremiah’s hometown of Anathoth. Perath is also the Hebrew word for Euphrates (Teach The Text Commentary p.88).



The Potter and the Clay



Potter moulding a clay jar

Jeremiah 18:1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² ‘Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.’ ³ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me. ⁶ He said, ‘Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.’ ⁷ If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, ⁸ and if that

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nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.

⁹ And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and

planted, ¹⁰ and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it. (NIVUK)

Jeremiah's Message Written in a Scroll

Jeremiah's constant condemnation of Judah's leaders made him very unpopular. He was not allowed to speak in public again like he did at the Temple Gate. But silencing the prophet did not stop God's message from being proclaimed. In the fourth year of King Jehoiakim's reign, around 605 BC, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah again—this time with a new instruction: write it down. Every warning, every call to repentance was to be recorded and delivered straight to the

king. If Jeremiah could not speak aloud, his words would still thunder from a scroll.

About Baruch the scribe of Jeremiah

Baruch was the son of Neriah, probably a noble family of scribes. His brother Seraiah was an official which indicated Baruch came from a literate and influential background (Jeremiah 51:59).



Baruch became a loyal and important figure preserving the word of God given to Jeremiah.



King Jehoiakim tears and throws Jeremiah's scroll into the fire

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Jeremiah appointed Baruch, the son of Neriah, to be his scribe – tasking him to write and to read his message in the Temple square for all the people to hear.

Jeremiah 36: 4 So Jeremiah sent for Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated all the prophecies that the Lord had given him, Baruch wrote them on a scroll. ⁵ Then Jeremiah said to Baruch, “I am a prisoner here and unable to go to the Temple.

⁶ So you go to the Temple on the next day of fasting, and read the messages from the Lord that I have had you write on this scroll. Read them so the people who are there from all over Judah will hear them. ⁷ Perhaps even yet they will turn from their evil ways and ask the Lord’s forgiveness before it is too late. For the Lord has threatened them with his terrible anger.”

⁸ Baruch did as Jeremiah told him and read these messages from the Lord to the people at the Temple. ⁹ He did this on a day of sacred fasting held in late autumn, during the fifth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah. People from all over Judah had come to Jerusalem to attend the services at the Temple on that day.

¹⁰ Baruch read Jeremiah’s words on the scroll to all the people. He stood in front of the Temple room of Gemariah, son of Shaphan the secretary. This room was just off the upper courtyard of the Temple, near the New Gate entrance. (NLT)

Baruch’s reading of the scroll did not go unnoticed. Some listeners, disturbed by

the message, wanted to report it to the palace. They said to Baruch, “We must tell the king what you have said, but first, tell us how you got these messages. Did they come from Jeremiah?”

“Yes,” said Baruch, “Jeremiah dictated them, and I wrote them down, word for word on the scroll.” The officials, understanding the danger, warned Baruch to hide—and by extension, Jeremiah as well. “We’ll make sure the scroll reaches the king,” they assured him.

While the scroll was being passed around finding its way to the king, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah once more. God revealed an even more sobering prophecy: because of their sin, God will use Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon to bring judgement on the land of Judah.

For 70 years the land of Judah will be desolate. No sounds of joy and gladness will be heard. The whole country will become a wasteland; Judah and the surrounding nations will serve the king of Babylon. But after the seventy years have passed God will punish the king of Babylon and his nation for their guilt (Jeremiah 25:1-12).

Meanwhile, the scroll containing this bold and terrifying message reached the king’s court—setting the stage for a dramatic confrontation between God’s truth and a defiant throne.

Jeremiah 36:21 The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll. Jehudi brought it from Elishama’s

room and read it to the king as all his officials stood by.²² It was late autumn, and the king was in a winterized part of the palace, sitting in front of a fire to keep warm.

²³ Each time Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, the king took a knife and cut off that section of the scroll. He then threw it into the fire, section by section, until the whole scroll was burned up.²⁴

Jeremiah Rewrites the Scroll

Jeremiah 36:27 After the king had burned the scroll on which Baruch had written Jeremiah's words, the Lord gave Jeremiah another message. He said,²⁸ "Get another scroll, and write everything again just as you did on the scroll King Jehoiakim burned.

²⁹ Then say to the king, "This is what the Lord says: You burned the scroll because it said the king of Babylon would destroy this land and empty it of people and animals.³⁰ Now this is what the Lord says about King Jehoiakim of Judah: He will have no heirs to sit on the throne of David. His dead body will be thrown out to lie unburied—exposed to the heat of the day and the frost of the night.

³¹ I will punish him and his family and his attendants for their sins. I will pour out on them and on all the people of Jerusalem and Judah all the disasters I promised, for they would not listen to my warnings."

³² So Jeremiah took another scroll and dictated again to his secretary, Baruch.

Neither the king nor his attendants showed any signs of fear or repentance at what they heard.

²⁵ Even when Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah begged the king not to burn the scroll, he wouldn't listen.²⁶ Then the king commanded his son Jerahmeel, Seraiah son of Azriel, and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah. But the Lord had hidden them. (NLT)

He wrote everything that had been on the scroll King Jehoiakim had burned in the fire. Only this time he added much more! (NLT)

Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch are now fugitives. Targeted for arrest, some of the officials even wanted to murder him. In the shadows, far from the city's noise, the prophet poured out his grief to God.

Due to constant persecution and threats to his life, Jeremiah was often troubled and in despair. Wounded, weary, and heartbroken in the midst of his prophetic ministry, Jeremiah spoke with raw honesty—his soul laid bare.

Jeremiah 15:10 Then I said, "What sorrow is mine, my mother. Oh, that I had died at birth! I am hated everywhere I go. I am neither a lender who threatens to foreclose nor a borrower who refuses to pay—yet they all curse me."

¹¹ The Lord replied, "I will take care of you, Jeremiah. Your enemies will ask you

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to plead on their behalf in times of trouble and distress...

¹⁵ Then I said, “Lord, you know what’s happening to me. Please step in and help me. Punish my persecutors! Please give me time; don’t let me die young. It’s for your sake that I am suffering.

¹⁶ When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven’s Armies.

¹⁷ I never joined the people in their merry feasts. I sat alone because your hand was on me. I was filled with indignation at their sins. ¹⁸ Why then does my suffering continue? Why is my wound so incurable? Your help seems as uncertain as a seasonal brook, like a spring that has gone dry.”

¹⁹ This is how the Lord responds: “If you return to me, I will restore you so you can

continue to serve me. If you speak good words rather than worthless ones, you will be my spokesman. You must influence them; do not let them influence you!

²⁰ They will fight against you like an attacking army, but I will make you as secure as a fortified wall of bronze. They will not conquer you, for I am with you to protect and rescue you. I, the Lord, have spoken! ²¹ Yes, I will certainly keep you safe from these wicked men. I will rescue you from their cruel hands.” (NLT)

The LORD had said to Jeremiah, “If you grow tired running with men, how will you compete against horses?” It was a warning—and a promise. Harder trials were coming, but God would give him strength to face them. The real test, the race with horses, was coming soon.

Lessons from the Story

1. Faithfulness can be costly, but it is very important. Jeremiah faced rejection, isolation, danger for speaking God’s truth. Following God may not always be popular, but faithfulness is more important than worldly approval. Today, standing for God’s truth in a cynical world can feel lonely, but faithfulness to God is more important than the approval of the world.
2. God’s word cannot be silenced. Even when the king cut and burned the scroll section by section, God told Jeremiah to write it again, adding more to the message. The written scroll preserved God’s message for the people who were not present to hear it. God used the burning of the scroll to preserve His message to Jeremiah, to be a blessing for a wider audience later in time, even until today.

Lessons from the Story

3. God uses ordinary things in our lives to show His people spiritual realities. He still uses our daily lives to shape, teach and speak through us. Nothing is wasted in God's hands.
4. God strengthens us for greater challenges. God told Jeremiah, "If you are tired running with men, how will you run with horses?" Trials prepare us for greater challenges. With God's help, we can endure and grow stronger through present trials.
5. It is okay to express our deepest and honest thoughts with God. Jeremiah poured out his sorrow, anger, and confusion to God. And God listened. You do not need to hide your emotions from God – He invites you to be real with Him. Even when we express our honest questions, God is still present and faithful.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we stay faithful to God when we feel isolated, rejected, or threatened like Jeremiah did? How do you handle peer pressure and stand for truth in a culture that may oppose Christian values?
2. Why do you think God used objects like a belt, wine jars, and pottery to teach people? Can you think of a simple thing in your life that God has used to teach you a lesson? How can paying attention to "everyday moments" help you grow in faith?
3. What does the story of King Jehoiakim burning the scroll, teach us about God's Word and His purposes?
4. Jeremiah was an ordinary person with all the human emotions and frailties – he felt depressed, angry, and confused. Have you been brutally honest with God in prayer? What happened when you were?
5. God told Jeremiah, "You must influence them; do not let them influence you." What does that mean in your life today – in school, online, or with friends? What is one way you can be an influence for truth instead of being influenced by the crowd?

CHAPTER 9

“FIRE IN MY BONES”: THE PROPHET WHO WOULD NOT BE SILENT

JEREMIAH 19:1 – 14; 23:16 – 25; 20:1 – 18



Jeremiah showing God's coming judgment

After the Egyptians and Assyrians were defeated at Carchemish in 605 BC, Babylon became the new superpower in the region. Babylon invaded Judah, turning it into a vassal state. King Jehoiakim, once loyal to Egypt, was now forced to pay tribute to Babylon. This happened between 605 to 601 BC.

In 601 BC, Babylon's army suffered a setback when they tried to invade Egypt.

Pharaoh Neco successfully stopped Nebuchadnezzar from entering Egypt, but from that time on, Egypt did not venture further north beyond their borders.

For three years Jehoiakim had been paying tribute to Babylon, but after their retreat from Egypt, he was emboldened by his advisors and false prophets – who insisted that God would protect Jerusalem and Egypt would rise again. So, he stopped paying tribute to Babylon.



The Babylonian Chronicles

A piece of the Babylon Chronicles concerning the early years of Nebuchadnezzar II.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

We can get extra information from a set of archaeological stone tablets called the Babylonian chronicles which tells the story and helps us set some dates. The story as recorded in the stone tablets show that the Biblical text as found in 2 Kings 24 is accurate and trustworthy.

Jeremiah had the difficult and lonely task of convincing him otherwise. Egypt would not come to Judah's rescue. Babylon would return, and this time, Jerusalem would not be spared. Jehoiakim needed to humble himself, repent and submit to the Babylonian king. The king of Judah did not heed Jeremiah's warning (2 Kings 24:1-4). Even though Jeremiah was in constant danger of arrest, if he appeared in public, he still went ahead whenever he was given a message to bring to the people.

One day God spoke to Jeremiah again.

Jeremiah 19:1 This is what the Lord says: 'Go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take along some of the elders of the people and of the priests ² and go out to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. There proclaim the words I tell you,

³ and say, "Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: listen! I am going to bring a disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.

⁴ For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned incense in it to gods that neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. ⁵ They have built the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal – something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. (NIVUK)

A devastating judgment was about to fall upon Jerusalem, far worse than anything the city had endured. War, famine, and

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terror would sweep through every street and house, leaving death and destruction in its wake. God had appointed Jeremiah to proclaim this dreadful message, and the visions he described were so grim that many branded him a prophet of doom.

The High Places

From the text, it is implied that the high places was somewhere very near Jerusalem, just across the Valley of Ben Hinnom. This high place was given to foreigners living in Jerusalem to build their altars which started from the time of King Solomon who had many foreign wives.



Child Sacrifice



Child sacrifice to Molech

By Charles Foster 1897

Source: Wikimedia Commons

⁶ So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. ⁷ “In

this place I will ruin the plans of Judah and Jerusalem. I will make them fall by the sword before their enemies, at the hands of those who want to kill them, and I will give their carcasses as food to the birds and the wild animals.

⁸ I will devastate this city and make it an object of horror and scorn; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds. ⁹ I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, and they will eat one another’s flesh because their enemies will press the siege so hard against them to destroy them.”

¹⁰ “Then break the jar while those who go with you are watching, ¹¹ and say to them, “This is what the Lord Almighty says: I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter’s jar is smashed and cannot be repaired. They will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room.

¹² This is what I will do to this place and to those who live here, declares the Lord. I will make this city like Topheth. ¹³ The houses in Jerusalem and those of the kings of Judah will be defiled like this place, Topheth – all the houses where they burned incense on the roofs to all the starry hosts and poured out drink offerings to other gods.”

¹⁴ Jeremiah then returned from Topheth, where the Lord had sent him to prophesy, and stood in the court of the Lord’s temple and said to all the people, ¹⁵ “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Listen! I am going to bring on this city

and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words.”¹⁷ (NIVUK)

The palace was filled with false prophets, who liked to say soothing words to the king. Even as Nebuchadnezzar was marching towards Jerusalem with his army, the official prophets were telling the king, the city would never fall, everything would be alright. The city would be protected by God, just as it was during the time of King Hezekiah.

Jeremiah had this to say about the lying prophets:

Jeremiah 23:16 This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.

¹⁷ They keep saying to those who despise me, “The Lord says: you will have peace.” And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, “No harm will come to you.”¹⁸ But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word? ...

²¹ I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied.

²² But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds...

²⁵ ‘I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, “I had a dream! I had a dream!”²⁶ How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds?’ (NIVUK)

When Pashhur son of Immer, the king’s official chief priest in charge of the Temple heard what Jeremiah had said, he arrested Jeremiah and had him beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin at the LORD’s temple. Jeremiah would be tortured and humiliated publicly in the hope of silencing him. But they did not kill him, probably in fear that some of the people still viewed him as a prophet despite his unpopular message.

Jeremiah 20:3 The next day, when Pashhur released him from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, “The Lord’s name for you is not Pashhur, but Terror on Every Side.”⁴ For this is what the Lord says: “I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; with your own eyes you will see them fall by the sword of their enemies. I will give all Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon, who will carry them away to Babylon or put them to the sword.

⁵ I will deliver all the wealth of this city into the hands of their enemies – all its products, all its valuables and all the treasures of the kings of Judah. They will take it away as plunder and carry it off to Babylon.⁶ And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into exile to Babylon. There you will die and be buried,

There are 2 Pashhurs mentioned in Jeremiah.

1. Pashhur son of Immer
Jeremiah 20:1–2

“When Pashhur son of Immer, the priest, the chief officer in the house of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks...”

- This Pashhur was a temple official (chief officer).
- He served during the reign of King Jehoiakim (609–597 BC).
- He persecuted Jeremiah for his prophecies of judgment.

He served under King Jehoiakim.

Pashhur son of Malchiah
Jeremiah 21:1–2

“The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur son of Malchiah and Zephaniah the priest...”

- This is a different Pashhur, not the son of Immer.
- He was an official sent by King Zedekiah to inquire of Jeremiah.
- He appears during the final siege of Jerusalem (588–586 BC).

He served under King Zedekiah.



you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies.”^(NIVUK)

This task of speaking against the establishment and giving a prophesy of doom was very dangerous and lonely business. It was always easier to praise the rulers and give them a message of hope, even if it was false hope.

In his despair, Jeremiah expresses his deepest feelings and gives a heart wrenching cry to the LORD. He had not desired to be a prophet, yet, the word of God given to him was like a fire that was unquenchable that refused to be silenced. And it was in this tension – between divine calling and human weakness – that Jeremiah’s greatness truly shone. His greatness as a prophet was amplified through his human frailty.

Jeremiah 20:7 You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived; you overpowered me

and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. ⁸Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long.

⁹But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak any more in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. ¹⁰I hear many whispering, ‘Terror on every side! Denounce him! Let’s denounce him!’ All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying, ‘Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him.’^(NIVUK)

Then he takes comfort in the Lord.

Jeremiah 20:11 But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonour will never be forgotten.

¹² Lord Almighty, you who examine the righteous and probe the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance on them, for to you I have committed my cause. ¹³ Sing to the Lord! Give praise to the Lord! He rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked. (NIVUK)

And then he feels depressed again when he looks at the task that is still ahead of him.

Jeremiah 20:14 Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! ¹⁵ Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, who made him very glad, saying, ‘A child is born to you – a son!’

¹⁶ May that man be like the towns the Lord overthrew without pity. May he hear wailing in the morning, a battle cry at noon. ¹⁷ For he did not kill me in the

womb, with my mother as my grave, her womb enlarged for ever. ¹⁸ Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?

(NIVUK)

Jeremiah knew that unless the people repented, Judah faced even greater disasters. How he must have wished that he was not given such a difficult task. He faced the ultimate test of a prophet: to deliver the word of God to an unbelieving people, knowing that he would be rejected and not see any fruit in his ministry until after his life was over. Jeremiah was trapped between God who had a powerful word for His people, and the people who resisted God’s message. Yet, this was his calling, and he would fulfill his task. This was the measure of the prophet – and the measure of the man.

Lessons from the Story

1. Persistent sin leads to irreversible judgment. The rulers and people had committed horrific sins – including child sacrifice – and refused to repent. The breaking of the potter’s jar showed that God’s judgment was final. Some choices, when repeated without repentance, lead to terrible and lasting consequences.
2. Jeremiah challenges the king’s prophets calling them “lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds”. He is arrested, beaten up and put in stocks in the public area. Today, people still prefer to hear messages that “feel good” over messages that speak an inconvenient truth and call for changes. But false hope leads us away from God.
3. God’s Word is a fire we cannot contain. Jeremiah tried to be silent, but God’s message burned within him. When we truly know God, His truth will stir our hearts and move us to speak – even when it is unpopular or risky.

Lessons from the Story

3. Faithful servants of God are sometimes faced with debilitating discouragement. Jeremiah knew he would face a great challenge in persuading the people to repent in his life time. There was going to be no applause, no reward – yet he kept on going. Jeremiah wanted to remain silent knowing the anger he would arouse by giving his message, but God’s word burned within him and he could not keep silent.
4. God understands our struggles and does not abandon us. Jeremiah’s prayers were raw, real, and emotional – but God did not reject him. Instead, God strengthened Him, reminding him that He was with him like a mighty warrior. Even when we sometimes feel overwhelmed, discouraged, and lonely, God never leaves us.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Jeremiah felt as he broke the jar at the Valley of Hinnom and announced the terrible judgment that was coming? What does it take to speak the truth when no one wants to hear it?
2. Jeremiah called out the false prophets who made people feel good but led them away from God. How would you feel when you see people who speak words that are soothing to hear but are clearly against the teachings of the Bible? How would you respond to them if it was your responsibility to do so?
3. Jeremiah struggled with despair and questioned his calling. He even wished he had never been born. Have you ever felt so discouraged? Yet he found strength in knowing the LORD was with him. How can we find hope when we feel overwhelmed or discouraged? How would you encourage someone in Jeremiah’s position, who is facing problems which seem to be insurmountable?
4. Jeremiah said God’s word was like a fire in his bones – he could not contain it in. What do you feel so passionate about that you cannot remain silent?
5. God reminded Jeremiah, “I am with you like a mighty warrior.” What would it look like for you to live each day knowing that God, the mighty warrior, is fighting for you? How would that change your view of daily challenges.

CHAPTER 10

CONFRONTING ZEDEKIAH – THE LAST KING OF JUDAH

REFERENCE: 2 KINGS 24:10 – 17; JEREMIAH 24:1 – 10; 27:1 – 28:17

The Death of Jehoiakim – c. Dec 598

In 601 BC after Nebuchadnezzar failed to defeat Neco of Egypt, Jehoiakim rebelled. Thinking that this was his chance to break away from the oppression of Babylon he stopped paying tribute to Babylon and sought an alliance with Egypt for protection. Jeremiah had delivered a message from God to Jehoiakim – to repent, turn back to God and submit to the king of Babylon. This was an unpopular message and Jehoiakim rejected it.

By December 598 BC, Nebuchadnezzar responded with force. The Babylonian army marched onto Judah, laying siege to Jerusalem. As the enemy closed in, Jehoiakim's officials tried to negotiate with the Babylonian army, but it was too late for diplomatic dialogue. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to punish Jehoiakim for rebelling against him. He wanted Jerusalem to surrender and open its doors for his army to enter or he would take it by force and inflict a greater punishment.

Daniel and Ezekiel sent to exile

- Ezekiel was taken into exile during this period of 597 BC when Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar
- Daniel was taken probably at an earlier date, c. 605 BC, after the Battle of Carchemish (Jeremiah 46:2, Daniel 1:1-6)



Josephus the historian

Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote that Nebuchadnezzar slew Jehoiakim, along with other high-ranking officers and then commanded Jehoiakim's body "to be thrown before the walls, without any burial." (Antiquities of the Jews, Book X, ch.6.part 3)

Sometime early during the siege, Jehoiakim died. We are not told how he died, but that his body was not given a proper burial, probably because the city was under siege. Thus, Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled, Jehoiakim would die a humiliating and dishonorable death. "Woe to him ... they will not mourn for him...he will have the burial of a donkey – dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem" (Jeremiah 22:18-19 NIV).



Jehoiachin surrenders himself and Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar

The Appointment of Jehoiachin c. March 597 BC

After the death of King Jehoiakim, his son, Jehoiachin succeeded him. He was 18 years old and his reign lasted only 3 months, ending around March of 597 BC, when he surrendered the city to Nebuchadnezzar. Because he had surrendered the city without a bloody battle, the Babylonian king spared the city and Jehoiachin's life but took him and his whole family into captivity. He spared the temple but carried away all its treasures. Ezekiel, another prophet, was one of the exiles (Ezekiel 1:1-3).

² Kings 24:10 During Jehoiachin's reign, the officers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up against Jerusalem and besieged it. ¹¹ Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived at the city during the siege.

¹² Then King Jehoiachin, along with the queen mother, his advisers, his commanders, and his officials, surrendered to the Babylonians. In the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he took Jehoiachin prisoner.

¹³ As the Lord had said beforehand, Nebuchadnezzar carried away all the treasures from the Lord's Temple and the royal palace. He stripped away all the gold objects that King Solomon of Israel had placed in the Temple. ¹⁴ King Nebuchadnezzar took all of Jerusalem captive, including all the commanders and the best of the soldiers, craftsmen, and artisans—10,000 in all. Only the poorest people were left in the land.

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¹⁵ Nebuchadnezzar led King Jehoiachin away as a captive to Babylon, along with the queen mother, his wives and officials, and all Jerusalem's elite. ¹⁶ He also exiled 7,000 of the best troops and 1,000

craftsmen and artisans, all of whom were strong and fit for war.

¹⁷ Then the king of Babylon installed Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, as the next king, and he changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah. (NLT)

Jeremiah and Zedekiah the last king of Judah

Zedekiah, an uncle of Jehoiachin, was twenty-one years old when he was installed as a vassal king by Nebuchadnezzar. In spite of all that had happened, with Jeremiah's warning and prophecies coming true, and Judah being punished, the best of the citizens taken exile, Zedekiah continued to do evil in the LORD's sight, just as Jehoiakim, his brother, had done.



Jeremiah and the two baskets of figs

Two Baskets of Figs

Zedekiah filled his court with false prophets who gave him bad advice and continued to lead the people in turning away from the LORD. God spoke to Jeremiah and told him a sobering truth; the future of Judah no longer rested with those still in the land, but with the exiles – those taken away to Babylon. The LORD spoke to Jeremiah and showed him two baskets of figs, placed in front of the temple.

Jeremiah 24:2 One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. ³ Then the Lord asked me, 'What do you see, Jeremiah?' 'Figs,' I answered. 'The good ones are very good, but the bad ones are so bad that they cannot be eaten.'

⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to me:
⁵ “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians.

⁶ My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. ⁷ I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

⁸ “But like the bad figs, which are so bad that they cannot be eaten,” says the Lord,

“so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or live in Egypt. (NIVUK)

Exiles and temple treasures will be returned

Read the full passage in Jeremiah 27:1-22



Prophecies about the surrounding lands

It is likely that in this time Jeremiah also gave messages about the neighbouring lands:

Moab: ch.48:1-47

Ammon: ch.49:1-6

Edom: ch.49:7-22

Damascus: ch.49:23-27

Kedar and Hazor: ch.49:28-33

Elam: ch.49:34-39

Planning Rebellion against Babylon

Zedekiah had been placed on the throne by King Nebuchadnezzar, under strict orders to remain loyal and pay regular tribute to Babylon. He had sworn an oath of allegiance—but it did not take long for him to waver.

Envoys from neighbouring countries had arrived in Jerusalem for a summit early in Zedekiah’s reign. Behind closed doors, they discussed plans for a united rebellion to break free from Babylon’s grip. Encouraged by his advisors and influenced by these foreign envoys and fueled by false hope that Egypt would intervene as an ally on their side, Zedekiah was eventually emboldened to rebel against Babylon.

Jeremiah 27:1 **Early in the reign of Zedekiah son**

of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² this is what the Lord said to me: ‘Make a yoke out of straps and crossbars and put it on your neck.

³ Then send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.

⁴ Give them a message for their masters and say, “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Tell this to your masters: ⁵ with my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please.

⁶ Now I will give all your countries into the hands of my servant Nebuchadnezzar

king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him. ⁷ All nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him.

⁸ ““If, however, any nation or kingdom will not serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon or bow its neck under his yoke, I will punish that nation with the sword, famine and plague, declares the Lord, until I destroy it by his hand. ⁹ So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers who tell you, “You will not serve the king of Babylon.”

¹⁰ They prophesy lies to you that will only serve to remove you far from your lands; I

will banish you and you will perish. ¹¹ But if any nation will bow its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let that nation remain in its own land to till it and to live there, declares the Lord.

¹² I gave the same message to Zedekiah king of Judah. I said, ‘Bow your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon; serve him and his people, and you will live.’” (NIVUK)

Jeremiah urged King Zedekiah to submit to Babylon, explaining that this was part of God’s plan—for a season. The exile was not the end. In time, God would bring the people back, along with their children, and even the treasures taken from the Temple would be restored. It was a message of surrender for now, but with the promise of hope and restoration in the future.

Confronting the False Prophet



Jeremiah carrying a yoke

CONFRONTING ZEDEKIAH – THE LAST KING OF JUDAH

With a heavy wooden yoke strapped to his shoulders, Jeremiah walked through the streets of Jerusalem—a living symbol of Judah's need to submit to Babylon. He spoke boldly, warning the people that rebellion would only lead to ruin. But not everyone agreed. At the entrance of the Temple, a man named Hananiah—one of the court's false prophets—rose to challenge him. With a voice full of confidence, Hananiah began to speak to the crowd.

Jeremiah 28:2 ‘This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³ Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the Lord's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon. ⁴ I will also bring back to this place Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and all the other exiles from Judah who went to Babylon”, declares the Lord, “for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.”’ (NIVUK)

Now there was a direct confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah who claimed that he spoke for God.

Jeremiah 28:5 Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah

before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord. ⁶ He said, ‘Amen! May the Lord do so! May the Lord fulfil the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the Lord's house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon.

⁷ Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: ⁸ from early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹ But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognised as one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true.’

¹⁰ Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah and broke it, ¹¹ and he said before all the people, “This is what the Lord says: “In



Jeremiah telling the people what Babylon will do to Judah and the other nations

the same way I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon off the neck of all the nations within two years.” At this, the prophet Jeremiah went on his way.

¹² After the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: ¹³ ‘Go and tell Hananiah, “This is what the Lord says: you have broken a wooden yoke, but in its place you will get a yoke of iron.

¹⁴ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will put an iron yoke on

the necks of all these nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they will serve him. I will even give him control over the wild animals.” ¹⁵ Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, ‘Listen, Hananiah! The Lord has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies.

¹⁶ Therefore this is what the Lord says: “I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the Lord.” ¹⁷ In the seventh month of that same year, Hananiah the prophet died. (NIVUK)

Lessons from the Story

1. Jehoiakim rejects Jeremiah’s message and rebels against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem and Jehoiakim dies early in the siege. He is not mourned and thrown out of the city wall. This fulfills the prophecy given by Jeremiah (22:18-19; 36:30). Everything Jeremiah warned about happened. Today, people still try to ignore or twist Scripture, but God’s truth stands firm. We are called to obey His word – even when it is unpopular.
2. The vision of the two baskets of figs tells us that God sees and preserves those who trust Him, even when life feels like exile. God regarded those who were exiled to Babylon as good figs. This must have been unexpected because being exiled would have been regarded as a punishment. But God continues to protect those who accept God’s purpose of bringing about the Babylonian exile.

Further, just because someone is in a hard place does not mean they are outside God’s care. Sometimes, it is the ones facing difficulty who are closest to God’s purpose.

Lessons from the Story

3. Zedekiah, after being made king by Nebuchadnezzar and swearing allegiance to him, organizes a meeting of envoys from the surrounding nations to plan a rebellion. Zedekiah had multiple warnings from Jeremiah, but instead of obeying God's will, he listened to flattery and gives in to political pressure. Being a leader requires wisdom and discernment so that one can follow the right voice or the right path. Today, leaders (and all of us) are faced with similar choices: follow what is true, or follow what is easy. The right path often costs more upfront but saves much in the long run.
4. Jeremiah carries a wooden yoke on his shoulder as a sign that God has designated Nebuchadnezzar to be their master and that they should submit to him. Hananiah offered a feel-good message of peace and quick restoration, but it was not from God. In a world full of "easy" message, we must learn to test everything against God's Word and choose truth over comfort or convenience.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Jehoiachin surrender the city to Nebuchadnezzar? Was it an act of cowardice or wisdom? How do we discern when to stand firm and when to surrender a situation for the sake of peace?
2. What were the lies proclaimed by the false prophet Hananiah? Why did he say it? How do we identify modern false prophets like Hananiah?
3. Jeremiah carried a wooden yoke to demonstrate submission to God's plan. What "yoke" might God ask us to carry today – things that do not look glamorous but are part of His purpose? How can we respond in obedience?
4. Why did Jeremiah challenge Hananiah and pronounce swift judgment? What would be a godly way to respond when someone today promotes teachings that are clearly against the Bible? How do we balance between truth and love?
5. In this chapter, the exiles are seen as "good figs" in God's eyes. Have you ever gone through a difficult time that later turned out to be part of God's bigger plan for your life? How does this shape the way you view challenges today?

CHAPTER 11

JEREMIAH WRITES TO THE EXILES OF JUDAH IN BABYLON

REFERENCES: JEREMIAH 29:1 – 32; 51:54 – 64

Jeremiah was given a difficult task. He had to convince the king that it was God's will for him to submit to the king of Babylon. In the past, prophet Isaiah had convinced King Hezekiah to resist the Assyrians, and God performed a miracle to save Jerusalem. Many of the false prophets were urging king Zedekiah to do the same. But Jeremiah's message was the opposite: submit to the pagan king of Babylon. This was a very difficult revelation to accept, and Jeremiah was hated and regarded a traitor for this.

The LORD had revealed to Jeremiah something deeper. The future Judah now

lay with those who had been carried into exile. After seventy years, God would bring them back and they are the ones who would rebuild the nation. Jeremiah then dictated a letter to Baruch his assistant to be sent to the exiles in Babylon.

Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles

Read the complete letter in Jeremiah
29:1-32



Waiting for seventy years was not a pleasant message to receive. One of the false prophets in exile, Shemaiah the Nehelamite, had sent letters from Babylon to the palace in Jerusalem urging

them to arrest Jeremiah because he was preaching blasphemy. Jeremiah had to address this problem.

Nebuchadnezzar had heard about the secret conference that was held in Jerusalem with the other rulers and talk of rebellion; and he wanted



Jeremiah dictates a letter to the exiles

an explanation. In the fourth year of Zezekiah's reign, around 593 BC,

Nebuchadnezzar summoned Zedekiah and demanded an explanation.

Jeremiah wrote an important letter to be brought and read to the exiles by the king's staff officer.

Jeremiah 51:59 This is the message Jeremiah the prophet gave to the staff officer Seraiah son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign. ⁶⁰ Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon – all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. ⁶¹ He said to Seraiah, 'When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. ⁶² Then say, "Lord, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither people nor animals will live in it; it will be desolate for ever." ⁶³ When you finish reading this scroll, tie a

stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. ⁶⁴ Then say, "So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring on her. And her people will fall." (NIVUK)

Some commentators have mentioned that the Hebrew word used to describe the staff officer going "with", could also mean "going on behalf" of the king. For details you can check up commentaries on Jeremiah 51:59. Whichever the case, it does not change the lesson of the story, which is the message found in Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, and that Zedekiah had sworn allegiance to the king of Babylon, but later broke that oath.



The letter is preserved for us in Jeremiah chapter 29

Jeremiah 29:4 This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.

⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.' ⁸ Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Do not let the prophets and diviners

among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. ⁹ They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,' declares the Lord.

¹⁰ This is what the Lord says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my good promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

¹⁴ I will be found by you,' declares the Lord, 'and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,' declares the Lord, 'and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.'

(NIVUK)

Jeremiah then tells the exiles in his letter, the king and the others still living in Jerusalem – they are like bad figs, too rotten to eat. The Lord will “send war, famine, and disease upon them and make them like bad figs, too rotten to eat. Jeremiah names some of their prophets who are telling them lies in God’s name; they will be punished. They have committed adultery with their neighbour’s wives and have lied in God’s name, saying things which God did not command them.

Jeremiah then addresses the accusations on him made by Shemaiah.

^{Jeremiah 29:24} Tell Shemaiah the Nehelamite, ²⁵ “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: you sent letters in your own name to all the people in Jerusalem, to the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, and to all the other priests. You said to Zephaniah, ²⁶ “The Lord has appointed you priest in place of Jehoiada to be in charge of the house of the Lord; you should put any maniac who acts like a prophet into the stocks and neck-irons.

²⁷ So why have you not reprimanded Jeremiah from Anathoth, who poses as a prophet among you? ²⁸ He has sent this message to us in Babylon: it will be a long time. Therefore build houses and

settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce.” ²⁹ Zephaniah the priest, however, read the letter to Jeremiah the prophet.

³⁰ Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: ³¹ ‘Send this message to all the exiles: “This is what the Lord says about Shemaiah the Nehelamite: because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, even though I did not send him, and has persuaded you to trust in lies, ³² this is what the Lord says: I will surely punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants. He will have no one left among this people, nor will he see the good things I will do for my people, declares the Lord, because he has preached rebellion against me.”’ (NIVUK)

At the end of Jeremiah’s letter, he records an oracle about what will happen to Babylon: ^{Jeremiah 51:49} ‘Babylon must fall because of Israel’s slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon. (NIVUK)

God will judge and punish Babylon for the evil they have done to Judah and to the other nations. ^{Jeremiah 51:54} ‘The sound of a cry comes from Babylon, the sound of great destruction from the land of the Babylonians. ⁵⁵ The Lord will destroy Babylon; he will silence her noisy din. Waves of enemies will rage like great waters; the roar of their voices will resound.

⁵⁶ A destroyer will come against Babylon; her warriors will be captured, and their

bows will be broken. For the Lord is a God of retribution; he will repay in full.⁵⁷ I will make her officials and wise men drunk, her governors, officers and warriors as well; they will sleep for ever and not awake,' declares the King, whose name is the Lord Almighty.

⁵⁸ This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Babylon's thick wall will be levelled and her high gates set on fire; the peoples exhaust themselves for nothing, the nations' labour is only fuel for the flames.'

⁵⁹ This is the message Jeremiah the prophet gave to the staff officer Seraiah son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign.⁶⁰ Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon – all that had been recorded concerning Babylon.

⁶¹ He said to Seraiah, 'When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud.⁶² Then say, "Lord, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither people nor animals will live in it; it will be desolate for ever."⁶³ When you finish

reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates.

⁶⁴ Then say, "So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring on her. And her people will fall."'
The words of Jeremiah end here. (NIVUK)

Jeremiah had warned Zedekiah to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, but Zedekiah, influenced by his court officials and false prophets went ahead with his plan to defy the king of Babylon. Even though he had sworn allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, as soon as he came back, he sent envoys to Egypt to ask for their assistance in rebelling against Babylon.

When Zedekiah stopped paying tribute to Babylon in 589 BC. Nebuchadnezzar knew he had to act. Judah and the surrounding territories had to be punished as an example to other states, in case they got ideas of breaking off also.

When Zedekiah and his officials heard that Nebuchadnezzar had mobilized his army and was marching towards Jerusalem, they became very afraid.

Lessons from the Story

1. In his letter, Jeremiah tells the people to be content where they are and trust in God's long-range plans:
 - Settle down and find blessings even in their exile
 - The exiles should not trust in lies promising a quick restoration
 - They should trust in the knowledge that God has a good plan for themEven if you are in your place of "exile" or difficult situation, trust that God will use your current situation for growth and purpose.

Lessons from the Story

2. Trust in God's bigger picture. God's promise of a future with hope was tied to a 70- year wait in exile. Real faith means holding on when the timeline is not what we want or expected. God's plans do not always match our expectations, but they are always good for those who love and trust in Him.
3. God will bring justice in the end.
Babylon looked invincible, but God had already declared its time is limited. In the time that God has set, Babylon will be judged and destroyed for the wickedness they have done to Jerusalem and other nations. In a world full of corruption, injustice and oppression, evil seems to be unstoppable. But God is a righteous Judge – He will bring justice in due time.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think God told the exiles to build homes, settle down, and even pray for the prosperity of Babylon? What does this say about how Christians should live and bless others – even in a non-Christian or difficult environment?
2. Jeremiah warned the exiles not to believe false prophets who offered “quick fix solutions.” What are some examples of quick-fix solutions or feel-good messages that people fall for today? What danger do they bring to our faith?
3. What does God's promise – “I know the plans I have for you ...plans to prosper you, not to harm you...” (Jeremiah 29:11) really mean in the context of exile and waiting for 70 years? How does understanding the context change how we apply this verse today, especially when facing long-term challenges?
4. God promised justice for Babylon's evil, but it was going to take time. How do we hold on to hope and faith when evil seems to go unpunished in our world?
5. Has there been a time in your life when you had to trust God's plan even when it seemed like things were not working out? What helped you to keep trusting? What did you learn about God?

CHAPTER 12

THE COMING DESTRUCTION AND RESTORATION – A NEW COVENANT FORETOLD

REFERENCES: JEREMIAH 21:3 – 7; 37:3 – 21



Zedekiah consults Jeremiah secretly

By now, Zedekiah could no longer deny the truth—his prophets had failed him. Again and again, they had insisted that Nebuchadnezzar would never reach Jerusalem. But now the Babylonian army stood at the city gates, poised for attack. Only one voice had spoken the truth all along—Jeremiah. He had warned Zedekiah not to break his oath to Babylon, to remain faithful to what God had allowed for a time.

Jeremiah's reply to Zedekiah's request

Read the full reply that Jeremiah spoke to the king's officers in Jeremiah 21:3 - 14



However, Zedekiah was not a strong leader. Fearful of confronting the influential false prophets in his court, he hesitated to act on what he knew was right.

Desperate and afraid, Zedekiah sent two of his officers to Jeremiah with a plea: “Please

ask the LORD on our behalf—will He perform a miracle to save us, like He did in the days of old, when the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem and God struck them down?”

Jeremiah 21:3 Jeremiah replied, “Go back to King Zedekiah and tell him, ⁴ ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I will make your weapons useless against the king of Babylon and the Babylonians who are outside your walls attacking you. In fact, I will bring your enemies right into the heart of this city.

⁵ I myself will fight against you with a strong hand and a powerful arm, for I am very angry. You have made me furious! ⁶ I will send a terrible plague upon this city, and both people and animals will die.

⁷ And after all that, says the Lord, I will hand over King Zedekiah, his staff, and everyone else in the city who survives the disease, war, and famine. I will hand them over to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and to their other enemies. He will slaughter them and show them no mercy, pity, or compassion.’

⁸ “Tell all the people, ‘This is what the Lord says: Take your choice of life or death!’ ⁹ Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who go out and surrender to the Babylonians will live. Their reward will be life! (NLT)

While the Babylonian army laid siege around Jerusalem, Jeremiah prophesied about King Zedekiah: ‘You would not die

by the sword. You will be captured by the king of Babylon, you will see the king of Babylon with your own eyes, and he will speak to you face to face. You will go to Babylon.”

In 588 BC, Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt fulfilled his promise of support by leading his army north to challenge the Babylonian forces laying siege to Jerusalem. His arrival stirred hope within the city walls—but that hope would soon prove short-lived.

However, he was a weak and ineffective commander. When the Babylonians heard of Egypt’s approach, they temporarily lifted the siege on Jerusalem to confront the Egyptian army. When the people in Jerusalem heard news that an Egyptian army had marched out to meet the Babylonians, they rejoiced, thinking that they would be saved. Everyone in the city thought that this was their moment of salvation.

Jeremiah 37:3 Nevertheless, King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah, to ask Jeremiah, “Please pray to the Lord our God for us.” ⁴ Jeremiah had not yet been imprisoned, so he could come and go among the people as he pleased.

⁵ At this time the army of Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt appeared at the southern border of Judah. When the Babylonian army heard about it, they withdrew from their siege of Jerusalem.

⁶ Then the word of the LORD came to

Jeremiah the prophet: ⁷ “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The king of Judah sent you to ask me what is going to happen. Tell him, ‘Pharaoh’s army is about to return to Egypt, though he came here to help you.’ ⁸ Then the Babylonians will come back and capture this city and burn it to the ground.’

⁹ “This is what the Lord says: Do not fool yourselves into thinking that the Babylonians are gone for good. They aren’t! ¹⁰ Even if you were to destroy the entire Babylonian army, leaving only a handful of wounded survivors, they would still stagger from their tents and burn this city to the ground!” (NLT)

With the siege temporarily lifted, movement in and out of Jerusalem became possible once more. Seizing the opportunity, Jeremiah set out to take care of some personal matters—an ordinary task on the surface, but one that God would soon use to deliver yet another powerful message to His people.

Jeremiah 37:11 When the Babylonian army left Jerusalem because of Pharaoh’s approaching army, ¹² Jeremiah started to leave the city on his way to the territory of Benjamin, to claim his share of the property among his relatives there. ¹³ But as he was walking through the Benjamin Gate, a sentry arrested him and said, “You are defecting to the Babylonians!” . . .

¹⁴ “That’s not true!” Jeremiah protested. “I had no intention of doing any such thing.” But Irijah wouldn’t listen, and he took

Jeremiah before the officials. ¹⁵ They were furious with Jeremiah and had him flogged and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary. Jonathan’s house had been converted into a prison. ¹⁶ Jeremiah was put into a dungeon cell, where he remained for many days.

¹⁷ Later King Zedekiah secretly requested that Jeremiah come to the palace, where the king asked him, “Do you have any messages from the Lord?” “Yes, I do!” said Jeremiah. “You will be defeated by the king of Babylon.”

¹⁸ Then Jeremiah asked the king, “What crime have I committed? What have I done against you, your attendants, or the people that I should be imprisoned like this? ¹⁹ Where are your prophets now who told you the king of Babylon would not attack you or this land? ²⁰ Listen, my lord the king, I beg you. Don’t send me back to the dungeon in the house of Jonathan the secretary, for I will die there.”

²¹ So King Zedekiah commanded that Jeremiah not be returned to the dungeon. Instead, he was imprisoned in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace. The king also commanded that Jeremiah be given a loaf of fresh bread every day as long as there was any left in the city. So Jeremiah was put in the palace prison. (NLT)

While Jeremiah was confined to the courtyard of the palace prison, he continued to speak while Baruch his scribe recorded his words. “This is what the LORD says: your injury is incurable. There

is no one to help you. There is no medicine that can heal you. You placed your hope in foreign allies, the surrounding nations and the Egyptians; they have all abandoned you, and do not care about you anymore.”

Jeremiah continued while the palace officials observed his actions and listened to his words with much contempt. Jeremiah told the people the only path to life was to accept defeat and go willingly into exile. If they humbled themselves and surrendered, they would live – and one day, God would bring them back. “This exile,” he said, “has an appointed end. And when that time is fulfilled, the LORD will punish Babylon for their arrogance and wickedness. Then He will gather His people once more and bring them to their land.”

Jeremiah 30:10 “So do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel,” says the Lord. “For I will bring you home again from distant lands, and your children will return from their exile. Israel will return to a life of peace and quiet, and no one will terrorize them. ¹¹ For I am with you and will save you,” says the Lord. “I will completely destroy the nations where I have scattered you, but I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you, but with justice; I cannot let you go unpunished.” ...

¹⁸ This is what the Lord says: “When I bring Israel home again from captivity and restore their fortunes, Jerusalem will be rebuilt on its ruins, and the palace reconstructed as before. ¹⁹ There will be

joy and songs of thanksgiving, and I will multiply my people, not diminish them; I will honor them, not despise them...

²⁰ Their children will prosper as they did long ago. I will establish them as a nation before me, and I will punish anyone who hurts them.... ²² You will be my people, and I will be your God.” (NLT)

Exile was imminent, but amidst the terrible suffering and famine they were experiencing, there was hope because the LORD their God would not abandon them. Jeremiah was basically telling them to accept defeat by the Babylonians because this punishment comes from God. But if they turn back to Him, He would rescue them after a period of exile.

Jeremiah 31:15 This is what the Lord says: “A cry is heard in Ramah— deep anguish and bitter weeping. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted—for her children are gone.” ¹⁶ But now this is what the Lord says: “Do not weep any longer, for I will reward you,” says the Lord. “Your children will come back to you from the distant land of the enemy.

New Covenant in the New Testament

- Hebrews 8:6–13 quotes Jeremiah 31 directly and explains that Jesus is the mediator of this New Covenant.
- At the Last Supper, Jesus said: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Luke 22:20)



¹⁷ There is hope for your future,” says the Lord. “Your children will come again to

their own land.¹⁸ I have heard Israel saying, ‘You disciplined me severely, like a calf that needs training for the yoke. Turn me again to you and restore me, for you alone are the Lord my God.

¹⁹ I turned away from God, but then I was sorry. I kicked myself for my stupidity! I was thoroughly ashamed of all I did in my younger days.’²⁰ “Is not Israel still my son, my darling child?” says the Lord. “I often have to punish him, but I still love him. That’s why I long for him and surely will have mercy on him. (NLT)

Amidst the terrible pain and suffering the people were going through Jeremiah gave them a promise for the future. God had not rejected them. He told them God would bring them back, and one day, He would make a new covenant with the people. Despite the people’s grievous wrongdoings, Israel (the people of God) is and will always be God’s child, and God’s love for His people will endure.

Jeremiah 31:31 “The day is coming,” says the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah.³² This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,” says the Lord.

³³ “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

³⁴ And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the Lord. “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.” (NLT)

Key Features of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:

Old Covenant (Sinai)	New Covenant (Jeremiah 31)
Written on stone tablets	Written on hearts and minds
External laws	Internal transformation
Mediated through priests	Direct relationship with God
Conditional on obedience	Rooted in God’s forgiveness
Often broken by people	Based on God’s grace and faithfulness

Lessons from the Story

1. King Zedekiah and those who have continued to disobey God's word will now face God's judgment. Judgement is imminent. Choosing to ignore God's word can lead to personal or spiritual disaster. Obedience may be difficult, but disobedience is far more costly.
2. Jeremiah had already prophesied that Egypt cannot help and that Babylon will prevail. We may be tempted to interpret changes in our situation as signs that we do not need to follow God's commands. Temporary relief or good news does not mean God's command no longer apply. When life gets easy, do not ignore God's Word. Stay rooted in the Biblical teachings, not in circumstances.
3. Even in judgment, God reminded His people there is hope. He promised restoration and renewal if they will turn back to Him. They will return to their land and be established as a nation under God's protection, and will prosper. God disciplines, but will show mercy when we repent. Even when we have messed up, He is ready to restore us when we humble ourselves and repent.
4. Jeremiah prophesied, in that day of restoration, God will make a new covenant with His people. Even though the older generation had failed to keep God's covenant, through the new covenant, God will forgive His people and empower them to know Him and be faithful to Him. The new covenant will be written in the hearts of each person and they will have a renewed and right relationship with God.

The New Covenant in the context and time of Jeremiah and Jesus. The "new covenant" in Jeremiah 31 is contextually specific to the exilic people. When the author of Hebrews cites it and applies it to Christians, it is akin to us being grafted into the vine (echoing Paul in Romans 11). This is to say, the Jeremiah 31 covenant already occurred / has already been made with the exiles.

Today, those of us who put our trust in Jesus, who has died on the cross for our sins and risen again, are similarly drawn into a new covenantal relationship with God.

Comments by: Dr Tan Ee Yan



Discussion Questions

1. Why and when are we tempted to assume God's Word no longer applies when circumstances seem to change in our favour? How can we be tempted to think that our way of thinking is correct when it is clearly in contrast to Biblical teaching?
2. Zedekiah listened to Jeremiah in secret but never had the courage to obey. Why do you think he did that? Although Zedekiah secretly protected Jeremiah and sought his counsel, he failed in submitting fully to God's Word and would face judgment. In what ways are we tempted to be "secret" believers instead of standing firm in our faith?
3. Jesus brought about the New Covenant by His death on the cross and resurrection. How are we living out what has been promised and required of us in the description of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31 – 34?

CHAPTER 13

THE LAST DAYS BEFORE THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

JEREMIAH 52:8 – 15; 38:2 – 28



Jeremiah buys a piece of land during a brief respite in the siege

In the last harrowing year of Nebuchadnezzar's siege on Jerusalem, the people were suffering from famine and disease. There was a great shortage of food. Hunger had driven some of the people to commit the unthinkable – cannibalism (Jeremiah 19:9, Lamentations 2:20). Even as the walls were about to be breached, King Zedekiah clung on to the hope that Jeremiah would pray, and God would relent and save them by miracles and wonders.

Then, in the middle of this despair, God gave Jeremiah an unexpected instruction: Buy a field. Not just quietly, but publicly—with silver, legal contracts, and official witnesses. What was the purpose of this purchase? It seemed absurd. What value was land when the city itself was about to fall? The Babylonians were about to seize everything. But God wanted to show the people a message through the actions of Jeremiah.

THE LAST DAYS BEFORE THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

^{Jeremiah 32:8} Then, just as the Lord had said he would, my cousin Hanamel came and visited me in the prison. He said, “Please buy my field at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. By law you have the right to buy it before it is offered to anyone else, so buy it for yourself.” Then I knew that the message I had heard was from the Lord.

⁹ So I bought the field at Anathoth, paying Hanamel seventeen pieces of silver for it.

¹⁰ I signed and sealed the deed of purchase before witnesses, weighed out the silver, and paid him.

¹¹ Then I took the sealed deed and an unsealed copy of the deed, which contained the terms and conditions of the purchase, ¹² and I handed them to Baruch son of Neriah and grandson of Mahseiah. I did all this in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, the witnesses who had signed the deed, and all the men of Judah who were there in the courtyard of the guardhouse.

¹³ Then I said to Baruch as they all listened, ¹⁴ “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘Take both this sealed deed and the unsealed copy, and put them into a pottery jar to preserve them for a long time.’ ¹⁵ For this is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘Someday people will again own property here in this land and will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields.’” ^(NLT)

Jeremiah’s constant warnings that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians spread fear and hopelessness throughout

the city. The king’s officials saw him as a threat—his words were demoralizing the people and undermining their will to resist. Some of them wanted him dead, convinced he was a danger to national morale. But they held back. Deep down, they feared the possibility that Jeremiah really was truly a prophet of God – and that silencing him might bring even worse judgment.

^{Jeremiah 38:2} “This is what the Lord says: ‘Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who surrender to the Babylonians will live. Their reward will be life. They will live!’” ³ The Lord also says: “The city of Jerusalem will certainly be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it.”

⁴ So these officials went to the king and said, “Sir, this man must die! That kind of talk will undermine the morale of the few fighting men we have left, as well as that of all the people. This man is a traitor!” ⁵ King Zedekiah agreed. “All right,” he said. “Do as you like. I can’t stop you.”

⁶ So the officials took Jeremiah from his cell and lowered him by ropes into an empty cistern in the prison yard. It belonged to Malkijah, a member of the royal family. There was no water in the cistern, but there was a thick layer of mud at the bottom, and Jeremiah sank down into it. ^(NLT)

Jeremiah was left in a deep, dark cistern that had no water, just mud at the bottom. With the Babylonians outside the city walls and the people suffering, Jeremiah

THE LAST DAYS BEFORE THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

found himself stuck alone, in darkness and silence, in a muddy hole in the ground. Why couldn't he have a message of hope like Isaiah had for Hezekiah? He could only say that sometime in the distant future, God would rescue His people and bring them back. But for now, the city would fall and it seemed Jeremiah would die, forgotten in the pit and without food or water.

But God was not finished with His prophet. Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian,

an important court official, heard that Jeremiah had been put into the cistern. He knew the prophet would not survive long in there. Acting quickly, he went to see the king and spoke to him in private.

Jeremiah 38:9 “My lord the king,” he said, “these men have done a very evil thing in putting Jeremiah the prophet into the cistern. He will soon die of hunger, for almost all the bread in the city is gone.”¹⁰ So the king told Ebed-melech, “Take thirty of my men with you, and pull Jeremiah out of the cistern before he dies.”

¹¹ So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to a room in the palace beneath the treasury, where he found some old rags and discarded clothing. He carried these to the cistern and lowered them to Jeremiah on a rope.

¹² Ebed-melech called down to Jeremiah, “Put these rags under your armpits to protect you from the ropes.” Then when Jeremiah was ready,¹³ they pulled him out. So Jeremiah was returned to the courtyard of the guard—the palace prison—where he remained. (NLT)

Some time later, Zedekiah, in fear and desperation called Jeremiah for a secret meeting. He said, “Jeremiah, I want to ask you something, but you must tell me the absolute truth.”

Jeremiah replied, “If I do, you will have me killed. And even if I give you advice, you won't listen to me.”

So, King Zedekiah lowered his voice and made a solemn oath, “As surely as the



Jeremiah was left in a cistern of mud but later rescued

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LORD our God lives, I will not kill you or hand you over to those who want you dead.”

Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah: ^{Jeremiah}
^{38:17} ... ‘If you surrender to the Babylonian officers, you and your family will live, and the city will not be burned down. ¹⁸ But if you refuse to surrender, you will not escape! This city will be handed over to the Babylonians, and they will burn it to the ground.’”

¹⁹ “But I am afraid to surrender,” the king said, “for the Babylonians may hand me over to the Judeans who have defected to them. And who knows what they will do to me!”

²⁰ Jeremiah replied, “You won’t be handed over to them if you choose to obey the Lord. Your life will be spared, and all will go well for you. ²¹ But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the Lord has revealed to me: ²² All the women left in your palace will be brought out and given to the officers of the Babylonian army...

²³ All your wives and children will be led out to the Babylonians, and you will not escape. You will be seized by the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned down.”

²⁴ Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Don’t tell anyone you told me this, or you will die! ²⁵ My officials may hear that I spoke to you, and they may say, ‘Tell us what you and the king were talking about. If you don’t tell us, we will kill you.’ ²⁶ If this happens, just tell them you begged me not to send you back to Jonathan’s dungeon, for fear you would die there.”

²⁷ Sure enough, it wasn’t long before the king’s officials came to Jeremiah and asked him why the king had called for him. But Jeremiah followed the king’s instructions, and they left without finding out the truth. No one had overheard the conversation between Jeremiah and the king. ²⁸ And Jeremiah remained a prisoner in the courtyard of the guard until the day Jerusalem was captured. (NLT)

Lessons from the Story

1. At the worst possible time – when the city was about to be captured and everything destroyed, God told Jeremiah to buy a piece of land. From a human point of view, this made no sense. But God was painting a picture: this is not the end. One day, life would return to the land where there will be buying and selling of land again. This reminds us that sometimes faith means trusting in God’s bigger plan, even when the situation looks hopeless.

Lessons from the Story

2. Jeremiah is convicted of treason and lowered into a cistern of mud, to die. He is rescued by Ebed-Melech, an African foreigner. Ebed-Melech did not have a prophetic calling or political power, but he had courage and compassion. God often uses unexpected people to carry out His purposes.
3. In the face of hostility and negative public opinion, faithfulness to God requires courage. Zedekiah proves himself to be weak and foolishly follows public opinion rather than the word of God. Jeremiah remained faithful, even in a muddy cistern. His boldness teaches us that standing for truth requires courage, especially when it goes against the crowd.

Discussion Questions

1. Jeremiah's transaction appears to be a foolish action. The Babylonians were about to destroy the whole city, and occupy the nation. Yet, God had instructed Jeremiah to buy the piece of land and do all that was required legally to show a point. Likewise, God told Zedekiah to surrender to the Babylonians. In the ears of the king's counsel, this would have been foolishness. How are we sometimes tasked by God to do something, even though it may seem foolish to others?
2. Have we been called by God to help someone we know is in the right, even though it is against public opinion?
3. When things look very bad in a situation, or in a company, or country, have we been called to give encouraging words and how can we do it?
 - How can you bring a message of hope to your school, community, or family when things seem gloomy?
 - Can faith-driven actions speak louder than words in such situations?
4. Have you been tempted to give prosperity promises even when we know the correct message should be one of repentance and coming hardship?
 - Have you been tempted to say what people want to hear rather than what they need to hear?
 - Why is it important to stay true to God's message, even when it is difficult or unpopular?

CHAPTER 14

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

REFERENCE: JEREMIAH 52:1-34 AND 39:1-40:6; LAMENTATIONS 1:1 – 22

The second and final siege of Jerusalem began after the Babylonians defeated the Egyptian army led by Pharaoh Hophrah. From the 15th of January 588 BC to the 18th of July 586 BC, the city endured 30 long months of brutal starvation, disease, and despair. The people were exhausted, the defenders weak and broken. Finally, the Babylonian army breached a section of the wall—and chaos erupted.

Under the cover of night, Jerusalem's soldiers abandoned their posts and fled. In

The cost of mobilizing a huge army

Mobilizing and marching an army more than a thousand five hundred kilometres away was time consuming. The logistics of food and supplies and being away from home was expensive as it was risky. He would make Zedekiah pay heavily for causing him such a great inconvenience.



a desperate bid to escape, King Zedekiah, his sons, and his top officials slipped out through a secret passage between two walls near the king's garden.



Zedekiah and his sons flee from the Babylonians under cover of darkness

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They ran toward the Jordan Valley, hoping to outrun the Babylonian forces. But there would be no escape. Zedekiah had broken his oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar—an oath he had sworn in God's name (2 Chronicles 36:13). Now, the Babylonian king was ready to unleash the full force of his fury—on both the city and the king who had betrayed him.

Jeremiah 52:8 But the Babylonian troops chased King Zedekiah and overtook him on the plains of Jericho, for his men had all deserted him and scattered. ⁹ They captured the king and took him to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath. There the king of Babylon pronounced judgment upon Zedekiah.

¹⁰ The king of Babylon made Zedekiah watch as he slaughtered his sons. He also

slaughtered all the officials of Judah at Riblah. ¹¹ Then he gouged out Zedekiah's eyes and bound him in bronze chains, and the king of Babylon led him away to Babylon. Zedekiah remained there in prison until the day of his death.

¹² On August 17th of that year, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard and an official of the Babylonian king, arrived in Jerusalem. ¹³ He burned down the Temple of the Lord, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He destroyed all the important buildings in the city.

¹⁴ Then he supervised the entire Babylonian army as they tore down the walls of Jerusalem on every side. ¹⁵ Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard,



Jerusalem was destroyed and set on fire

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took as exiles some of the poorest of the people, the rest of the people who remained in the city, the defectors who had declared their allegiance to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the craftsmen.

¹⁶ But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the poorest people to stay behind to care for the vineyards and fields. ^(NLT) The Babylonians then brought devastating destruction upon Jerusalem, tearing through the city and plundering it without restraint. The once-proud city was reduced to ruins. Even the temple – the magnificent crown jewel of Solomon’s reign—was plundered without mercy. Its sacred treasures were looted, its beauty defiled as they carried away all the precious metal and treasures of Solomon’s temple to Babylon.

Nebuzaradan the Babylonian army commander then took Seriah the high

priest and all the senior ranking priests and officers of the palace to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ^{Jeremiah 52: 27} And there at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon had them all put to death. So the people of Judah were sent into exile from their land.

²⁸ The number of captives taken to Babylon in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign was 3,023. ²⁹ Then in Nebuchadnezzar’s eighteenth year he took 832 more. ³⁰ In Nebuchadnezzar’s twenty-third year he sent Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, who took 745 more—a total of 4,600 captives in all. ^(NLT)

For their betrayal and alliance with Egypt to rebel, Nebuchadnezzar was going to punish Judah heavily.

^{Jeremiah 39:8} Meanwhile, the Babylonians burned Jerusalem, including the royal palace and the houses of the people, and

they tore down the walls of the city.

⁹ Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, took as exiles to Babylon the rest of the people who remained in the city, those who had defected to him, and everyone else who remained. ^(NLT)

Nebuchadnezzar had heard about



The temple in Jerusalem burned and plundered

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The survivors of the destruction of Jerusalem taken in exile to Babylon

Jeremiah, how he had urged his people to submit to him and not to rebel. As refugees and captives poured out of the fallen city, many spoke of the man who had warned, in God's name, not to fight against the Lord's name. The Babylonian king recognised Jeremiah as a person of insight and importance and did not wish to harm him (Jeremiah 39:11-14).

Nebuzaradan, the commander of the Babylonian army was ordered to look for Jeremiah. "See that no harm comes to him" the king ordered, "look after him and give him anything he wants." The king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as the governor of Judah, to care for the remaining people and the land.

Not long after, the Babylonian commander found Jeremiah among the

other prisoners in the ruins of Jerusalem, bound in chains, half-starved and despondent at the destruction around them. Ebed-melech the Ethiopian who had saved Jeremiah from the muddy pit was also spared and survived the destruction of Jerusalem because he had trusted in the LORD (Jeremiah 39:16-18).

Although he had prophesied about God's coming judgment, Jeremiah still could not stop feeling deeply sad when he witnessed the city burnt down and the temple destroyed. Now



Nebuzaradan the Babylonian commander sets Jeremiah and Ebed-melech free

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God used the enemy commander to speak words of comfort to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 40:2 The captain of the guard called for Jeremiah and said, “The Lord your God has brought this disaster on this land,³ just as he said he would. For these people have sinned against the Lord and disobeyed him. That is why it happened.

⁴ But I am going to take off your chains and let you go. If you want to come with me to Babylon, you are welcome. I will see that you are well cared for. But if you don’t want to come, you may stay here. The whole land is before you—go wherever you like.⁵ If you decide to stay, then return to Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan. He has been appointed governor of Judah by the king of Babylon. Stay there with the people he rules. But it’s up to you; go wherever you like.”



Jeremiah and Ebed-melech looking at the destruction of Jerusalem

Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, gave Jeremiah some food and money and let him go.⁶ So Jeremiah returned to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah, and he lived in Judah with the few who were still left in the land. ^(NLT)

Being an eye-witness of Judah’s disobedience and experiencing the destruction of Jerusalem so traumatised Jeremiah that he expressed his sorrow in poems which have been recorded in the book of Lamentations. Here are some excerpts from the book of Lamentations.

Lamentations 1:1 How deserted lies the city,
once so full of people!
How like a widow is she,
who once was great among the nations!
She who was queen among the provinces
has now become a slave.

² Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is no one to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies.

³ After affliction and harsh labour, Judah has gone into exile. She dwells among the nations; she finds no resting place. All who pursue her have overtaken her in the midst of her distress.

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...

¹⁶ 'This is why I weep
and my eyes overflow with tears.
No one is near to comfort me,
no one to restore my spirit.
My children are destitute
because the enemy has prevailed.'

¹⁷ Zion stretches out her hands,
but there is no one to comfort her.
The Lord has decreed for Jacob
that his neighbours become his foes;
Jerusalem has become
an unclean thing among them.

¹⁸ 'The Lord is righteous,
yet I rebelled against his command.
Listen, all you peoples;
look on my suffering.
My young men and young women
have gone into exile.

¹⁹ 'I called to my allies
but they betrayed me.
My priests and my elders
perished in the city
while they searched for food
to keep themselves alive.

²⁰ 'See, Lord, how distressed I am!
I am in torment within,
and in my heart I am disturbed,
for I have been most rebellious.
Outside, the sword bereaves;
inside, there is only death.

²¹ 'People have heard my groaning,
but there is no one to comfort me.
All my enemies have heard of my distress;
they rejoice at what you have done.
May you bring the day you have
announced
so that they may become like me.

²² 'Let all their wickedness come before
you;
deal with them
as you have dealt with me
because of all my sins.
My groans are many
and my heart is faint.' (NLT)

Lessons from the Story

1. The deliverance of Jeremiah and Ebed-Melech, a foreigner who trusted in God, are contrasted with King Zedekiah and the officers who opposed the word of God and are punished severely. God honours those who trust Him, no matter their background. In a world that often celebrates power and popularity, God still values integrity, courage and faith in Him.

Lessons from the Story

2. The destruction of Jerusalem was complete. Even the temple was destroyed. But the punishment was even more severe on the disobedient rulers who were entrusted with the safety of the nation. Leadership comes with a greater responsibility and accountability to God, and without faith leads to ruin.
3. Amid the destruction, God preserved a remnant of people. Jeremiah is freed by the Babylonians and given a choice to join the exiles in Babylon or to stay with those left behind in Judah. God's judgment is just, but His mercy is given to those who put their trust in Him.
4. Lamentations is an expression of deep grief written in Hebrew poetry over the destruction of Jerusalem. Sin and rebellion against God lead to terrible judgment and consequences. The destruction of Jerusalem is horrific and leaves the eye-witnesses utterly devastated. But it also reminds us that acknowledging sin and repentance leads to healing.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did God allow his holy temple to be plundered of its valuable objects and destroyed?
 - What does it say about what God expects of true worship?
 - In our modern worship, are we more focused on buildings and rituals, or on living faithfully and in obedience to God's word?
2. Why do you think Jeremiah chose to stay back in Judah after he had been freed and given a choice to join the exiles in Babylon or to remain behind?
 - Have you ever chosen to stay in a difficult situation to serve others, even when you had the option to walk away?
3. Why was Judah's punishment so devastating?
 - What does this say about sin and God's judgment?
 - Is there hope, and where can hope be found?
 - What does this say about the salvation that is now available through Jesus Christ?

CHAPTER 15

JEREMIAH AND GOVERNOR GEDALIAH

REFERENCE: JEREMIAH 40 – 44; LAMENTATIONS 3:19 – 24

Gedaliah son of Ahikam had been appointed the Governor of Judah by the king of Babylon. He gathered the people who had been left behind and reassured them, “Do not be afraid to serve the Babylonians, settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon.” They were to harvest the wine, summer fruit and olive oil, and live in the land. There was an abundant harvest that year. But there was trouble.

Johanan, son of Kareah, one of the leaders of a band of warriors came to warn Gedaliah that there was a plot by the Ammonite king to murder him. “Don’t you know that Baalis king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to take your life?”

Johanan said to Gedaliah. “Let me go and take care of him quietly – no one will know,” Johanan said, “If you are killed, everything will fall apart again. Why should he take your life and cause the Jews who are gathered around you to be scattered and the remnant of Judah to perish?” But Gedaliah did not believe there was a plot and would not agree to such an action.

Jeremiah 41:1 But in midautumn of that year, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and grandson of Elishama, who was a member of the royal family and had been one of the king’s high officials, went to Mizpah with ten men to meet Gedaliah. While they were eating together, ² Ishmael and his ten men suddenly jumped up, drew their swords, and killed Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor. ³ Ishmael also killed all the Judeans and the Babylonian soldiers who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah.

Ishmael was a ruthless bandit and murderer who worked for the king of the Ammonites. He also killed many other Judeans.

Jeremiah 41:10 Then Ishmael made captives of the king’s daughters and the other people who had been left under Gedaliah’s care in Mizpah by Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard. Taking them with him, he started back toward the land of Ammon. ¹¹ But when Johanan son of Kareah and the other military leaders heard about Ishmael’s crimes, ¹² they took all their men and set out to stop him. They caught up with him at the large pool near Gibeon.

JEREMIAH AND GOVERNOR GEDALIAH

¹³ The people Ishmael had captured shouted for joy when they saw Johanan and the other military leaders. ¹⁴ And all the captives from Mizpah escaped and began to help Johanan. ¹⁵ Meanwhile, Ishmael and eight of his men escaped from Johanan into the land of Ammon.

¹⁶ Then Johanan son of Kareah and the other military leaders took all the people they had rescued in Gibeon—the soldiers, women, children, and court officials whom Ishmael had captured after he killed Gedaliah. ¹⁷ They took them all to the village of Geruth-kimham near Bethlehem, where they prepared to leave for Egypt. ¹⁸ They were afraid of what the Babylonians would do when they heard that Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, the governor appointed by the Babylonian king. (NLT)

Johanan asked Jeremiah to pray for them, “Please pray to the LORD your God for us. We are only a tiny remnant of survivors. We are weak compared to what we were before. Pray that God will show us what we should do and where should we go?” They promised that they would follow whatever Jeremiah advised. Jeremiah agreed and prayed for them.

Jeremiah 42:7 Ten days later the Lord gave his reply to Jeremiah. ⁸ So he called for Johanan son of Kareah and the other military leaders, and for all the people, from the least to the greatest. ⁹ He said to them, “You sent me to the Lord, the God of Israel, with your request, and this is his reply: ¹⁰ ‘Stay here in this land. If you do, I will build you up and not tear you down; I

will plant you and not uproot you. For I am sorry about all the punishment I have had to bring upon you.’”

¹¹ Do not fear the king of Babylon anymore,’ says the Lord. ‘For I am with you and will save you and rescue you from his power. ¹² I will be merciful to you by making him kind, so he will let you stay here in your land.’ (NLT)

Jeremiah urged them to stay for God will protect and prosper them.

“Jeremiah 42:13 “But if you refuse to obey the Lord your God, and if you say, ‘We will not stay here; ¹⁴ instead, we will go to Egypt where we will be free from war, the call to arms, and hunger,’ ¹⁵ then hear the Lord’s message to the remnant of Judah.

This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you are determined to go to Egypt and live there, ¹⁶ the very war and famine you fear will catch up to you, and you will die there. ¹⁷ That is the fate awaiting every one of you who insists on going to live in Egypt. Yes, you will die from war, famine, and disease. None of you will escape the disaster I will bring upon you there.’ (NLT)

Jeremiah Taken to Egypt

Jeremiah 43:1 When Jeremiah had finished giving this message from the Lord their God to all the people, ² Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the other proud men said to Jeremiah, “You lie! The Lord our God hasn’t forbidden us to go to Egypt!

³ Baruch son of Neriah has convinced you to say this, because he wants us to stay here and be killed by the Babylonians or be carried off into exile.”

⁴ So Johanan and the other military leaders and all the people refused to obey the Lord’s command to stay in Judah.

⁵ Johanan and the other leaders took with them all the people who had returned from the nearby countries to which they had fled.

⁶ In the crowd were men, women, and children, the king’s daughters, and all those whom Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, had left with Gedaliah. The prophet Jeremiah and Baruch were also included.

⁷ The people refused to obey the voice of the Lord and went to Egypt, going as far as the city of Tahpanhes. (NLT)

Jeremiah was taken against his will to Egypt by the refugees from Judah. Although the Bible does not explicitly state the place and time of his death, Jewish tradition and early Christian sources say that he died in Tahpanhes, known today as Tell Defenneh in Egypt.

Baruch his faithful assistant was with him till the end in Egypt. He recorded all the words of Jeremiah and made sure they

reached the exiles in Babylon. Thanks to him, we have the powerful and enduring messages of Jeremiah preserved in the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations.

One can imagine Baruch reflecting with a heavy heart: “What a sorrowful life my master lived – rejected, persecuted, imprisoned, and



Jeremiah died and was buried in Egypt - according to Jewish historian Josephus and other early Christian historians

JEREMIAH AND GOVERNOR GEDALIAH

never seeing the fulfilment of his ministry in his lifetime.” And yet, Jeremiah’s legacy was far from forgotten His words live on.

We know that Jeremiah left a lasting mark in the Bible because after the return of the exiles to Judah, just as Jeremiah had prophesied, his name was recorded as a prophet of God in the later books such as 2 Chronicles (35:25), Daniel (9:2), and he is even mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 2:17-18, 16:14).

Baruch would have remembered the words, Jeremiah the weeping prophet spoke to him in his earlier years: ^{Jeremiah 20:9} But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak any more in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. ^(NIVUK)

And Baruch would also recall the words of Jeremiah during his darkest hours, when despair seemed overwhelming and hope was all but lost – yet even then, he steadfastly anchored his hope in the LORD.

^{Lamentations 3:19} Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! ²⁰ My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me.

²¹ But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

²⁴ “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” ^(ESV)

Lessons from the Story

1. God grants the remnants living in Judah a bountiful summer harvest. Gedaliah the governor encourages the people to settle down, cultivate the land and serve under the Babylonians. But soon there is trouble. The Ammonite king sends an assassin, Ishmael, who murders the Governor Gedaliah and takes many hostages. Sometimes, ignoring warnings or failing to confront evil can lead to devastating consequences. Discernment and courage are necessary for those who lead.
2. Johanan a local chieftain, rescues the hostages. He does the right thing by asking Jeremiah for a word from God. But he does the wrong thing when he disobeys the word given by Jeremiah to stay in Judah. Instead, he leads his group of people to Egypt to escape the Babylonians and forces Jeremiah to go with him. We may ask God for direction, but true faith is shown through obedience.

Lessons from the Story

3. Baruch and Jeremiah are forced to go to Egypt where sadly, the people continued to disobey the word of the Lord given through Jeremiah. Though Jeremiah did not live to see the fruit of their work, his words left a strong mark that influenced generations to come. Obedience to God's calling in hard places may impact lives beyond our own time, even if we never see the results.
4. Lamentations, written as an eye-witness account of the destruction of Jerusalem, poetically describes grief and sorrow, but yet, in the midst of despair, there promises hope because God's mercies are "new every morning" and great is His faithfulness. God's faithfulness does not end when our world falls apart.

Discussion Questions

1. Should Gedaliah have agreed to send Johanan to stop kill the assassins led by Ishmael, or at least to have taken more precaution on his own safety? What was at stake if the governor appointed by the king of Babylon was murdered?
 - Was Gedaliah being compassionate or careless?
 - How do we balance trust with caution and responsibility?
 - Have you ever ignored a warning and later regretted it?
2. Was Johanan sincere when he asked Jeremiah to ask the LORD for guidance on their proposed journey to Egypt?
 - Why do you think he wanted to go to Egypt?
 - Do we seek God's will to follow it, or just to confirm our own plans?
3. Why did Baruch not follow the other exiles to Babylon where he could possibly have gotten married and settled down? He wrote the letters from Jeremiah and knew what Jeremiah said about God's favour on the exiles.
 - What does Baruch's loyalty teach us about friendship, calling, and faith?
 - Have you ever stood by someone based on principle even when it cost you comfort and opportunities?
4. How would you find hope if you were in a situation like Jeremiah?
 - Surrounded by people who continuously rebelled and sinned against God?
 - What words of comfort can we find in the Bible and as new covenant followers of Jesus Christ?

CHAPTER 16

EPILOGUE – THE LEGACY AND IMPACT OF JEREMIAH’S MINISTRY



Jeremiah on the ruins of Jerusalem

The Life and Ministry of Jeremiah – A Voice in the Storm

Jeremiah was born into a priestly family in the village of Anathoth, which was in the tribal lands of Benjamin. His life might have followed a simple path of temple

service and community leadership—until God interrupted his youth with a calling that would change everything. Before he had even found his confidence, God spoke: *“I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”* Jeremiah hesitated. He felt too young, too unqualified. But God assured him: *“Do not be afraid... I am with you.”*

Thus began one of the most intense and emotionally charged ministries in all of Scripture. Jeremiah’s prophetic work spanned over 40 years—from around 627 BC to beyond 586 BC—and through the reigns of five kings: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. His messages were not easy to hear—and even harder to deliver.

He began during the reign of King Josiah, a reformer king who tried to bring the nation back to God by restoring the temple and reviving the Mosaic Law. But while the king worked on outward reforms, Jeremiah’s messages targeted the deeper issue—the *heart* of the nation. He warned that burnt offerings and temple rituals were meaningless without true repentance, a return to justice, and a renewed relationship with God. He didn’t mince words about idolatry, corruption, and hypocrisy. Naturally, this made him a deeply unpopular figure among temple

officials and palace insiders, who viewed him as disruptive, even dangerous.

All of this took place as the small country of Judah was buffeted by seismic forces in the region between the superpowers Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon. Jeremiah warned the people not to place their hope in foreign alliances or military power, but few listened. After the death of King Josiah, Jeremiah was constantly in danger, in prison or in trouble with the rulers of the land. Mocked, beaten, and lonely,

throughout that time, he never wavered in his task to speak God's word to an unrepentant nation.

Jeremiah's life was marked by sorrow, rejection, and relentless trials. Yet through it all, he remained unwavering in his obedience to God. His story reminds us that in God's eyes, true success is not measured by popularity or visible results—but by faithfulness, even when the world refuses to listen.

Jeremiah's Messages and the People's Response



Jeremiah's ministry was not just a series of powerful words—it was deeply personal. He poured his heart into every message, often overwhelmed with grief and loneliness. It is no wonder he became known as “the weeping prophet.” His tears were not just for himself—they flowed for a nation that stubbornly refused to repent and for the devastation he knew was coming.

Throughout his long and difficult ministry, Jeremiah's central message remained consistent: Return to God.

*Scroll of the Book of Jeremiah written in c.1600 in Iraq
Owner: Christian Heritage Foundation, Texas
Source: Wikimedia Commons*

Here are the three key themes that defined his prophetic message:

1. Exposing Hypocrisy and Covenant Betrayal

Jeremiah boldly confronted the religious and political leaders of Judah. They were careful to observe temple rituals and claimed safety because of the temple’s presence in Jerusalem. But they continued with the practice of making sacrifices to idols and foreign deities. Jeremiah also spoke against social injustice and moral decline in Judahite society. Their way of life violated God’s covenant laws. Jeremiah did not just see these as sin—he described it as betrayal of a loving relationship. Using vivid imagery, he compared Judah to an unfaithful spouse who had broken not only God’s law but God’s heart. He warned that the temple would not protect them from judgment if their hearts remained far from God.

2. Call to Repent and Submit to God’s Discipline

Repent or face judgement. “Do not think you can escape punishment by your clever schemes, making alliances with unreliable nations like Egypt.” These would not save them. Even more shocking to his audience,

Jeremiah declared that submission to Babylon was God’s will for Judah—for a season. To resist Babylon was to resist God Himself. Only true repentance and surrender to God’s discipline would lead to survival and eventual restoration. But his words were met with resistance, hostility, and disbelief.

3. Hope Beyond Judgment: The Promise of a New Covenant

Beyond the judgement, there was hope for a glorious future restoration both for Judah as well as for the nations. At the heart of this hope was a promise: God would make a New Covenant. Unlike the covenant written on stone tablets and often broken by the people, this new covenant would be written on their hearts. It would be rooted in a deep, personal relationship with God—one marked by forgiveness, transformation, and faithfulness.

Jeremiah’s message challenged his generation to see beyond religion to relationship, beyond ritual to repentance, and beyond judgment to redemption. Though the people rejected him, his words endured—because they were not his own, but the words of the living God.

**The Legacy of Jeremiah
A Prophet Rejected, Yet Remembered**

At first glance, Jeremiah’s life might look like the story of a failed prophet. His messages were ignored, his warnings rejected, and his personal life marked by suffering. Other than King Josiah, who

responded but died early in Jeremiah’s ministry, his message was rejected and he faced persecution, torture, imprisonment, and even attempted murder. He witnessed the destruction that came as a result of the

people’s failure to heed his warning.

Then Jeremiah was forcibly taken to Egypt against his will. According to early Jewish and Christian tradition, Jeremiah died a martyr’s death in Egypt where he continued to preach God’s world.

Some early church historians have recorded that he died a martyr’s death in Egypt when his messages of repentance were rejected violently. By the standards of the world, Jeremiah would have been considered failure: no large following, no revival, no national repentance. And yet, the full truth of his ministry would only be recognized after his death.

Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem
By Rembrandt c.1630
Source: Wikimedia Commons



After the Exile: Prophecies Fulfilled

Jeremiah had prophesied that the exile would last 70 years, after which, God would bring His people back to their homeland and they would rebuild their nation. Jeremiah’s letters to the exiles were preserved together with the writings of Baruch his scribe.

The first batch of exiles taken to Babylon, which included future prophets like Daniel, happened in 605 BC, after Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians and installed Jehoiakim as a vassal king. More exiles were sent to Babylon in later years.

But 70 years after the first batch had arrived, the Babylonian Empire fell to the Persians. Cyrus, king of the Persians then decreed that the exiles would be released to go back to their home country and rebuild their nation, provided they continued to pay tribute. This happened in 535 BC. Now, the exiles realized that Jeremiah had truly spoken for God. His prophecy of a 70-year exile had come true. They began to re-look at all the writings of Jeremiah which Baruch had sent to them and understood that Jeremiah was truly a prophet sent by God.

The Lasting Legacy of Jeremiah: Lessons for Today

1. His Life of courage and upholding the truth

Jeremiah’s ministry spanned over 40 years from the reign of King Josiah until and beyond the destruction of Jerusalem. His task of calling a stubborn and rebellious people to repent and turn back to God was very costly to him. It would require him to sacrifice having a family, face rejection, imprisonment, torture, and personal anguish. But Jeremiah remained faithful to carrying out the task set for him, and speaking God’s word. Even when he did not want to speak the words given to him, he could not hold it back because it “burned within” him (Jeremiah 20:9).

True faithfulness is not about popularity or visible results. It is about standing firm on God’s truth, even when it costs us comfort, reputation, or safety.

2. A Voice of Heart-felt Compassion

Jeremiah’s emotional connection to his message shows the prophet’s deep concern for the people he was preaching to. He was not detached from his warnings of judgment but he truly felt the pain of the people and the suffering they would endure if they continued in their sin and refusal to repent. How much concern do we have for a lost people today?

3. Restoration and the New Covenant

While much of Jeremiah’s prophecies concerned warnings of judgment, he also delivered a message of future hope. One of the most significant messages he

delivered was the prophecy of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Even though the people had failed to keep the previous covenant, God remains faithful and wants to renew His relationship with Israel and Judah. While the Torah was given to Israel externally at Sinai, now God would internalize the Torah in the hearts of the people. It is a new covenant marked by grace and forgiveness making a new and intimate relationship with God possible. The exiles did return to Jerusalem and renewed their relationship with God through worship and the keeping of the Sabbath.

In the New Testament, we have a new covenant with God too. We have a personal relationship with God through the forgiveness of sins, through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. This relationship is forged within our hearts. This message of inward transformation is fundamental to the Christian faith, which speaks of a restoration of a personal relationship with God and the working of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1-2).

4. Speaking Against Social Injustice

Jeremiah spoke against rulers who exploited their citizens. Jehoiakim was guilty of taxing his people to pay tribute but also spending lavishly to build a luxurious palace for himself. Jeremiah called out his wickedness at the risk of facing the king’s wrath (Jeremiah 22:13-14). Labour exploitation was against the covenant law of God as found in Leviticus

19:15. Followers of Jesus are also called to take a stand against oppression, unfair treatment, and economic injustice (James 5:4).

5. Call for Return to God

In times of political turmoil, spiritual decline, and moral apathy, Jeremiah’s call for repentance is echoed in Christian preaching, intercessory prayer movements, and advocacy for ethical business and societal practices. His unwavering dedication to God’s Word challenges believers to stay rooted in Scripture and be courageous even at the risk of being ridiculed or other forms of hostilities.

The legacy of the prophet Jeremiah endures as a powerful testimony of unwavering obedience amid hardship, deep

compassion for a wayward people, and bold proclamation of God’s unchanging truth. His life continues to challenge us today—to stand for truth with courage, to love with compassion, and to hold fast to hope.

In an age marked by moral confusion and spiritual drift, Jeremiah’s voice still echoes with urgency in ^{Jeremiah 15:19-20}, “If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.” ^(NIVUK) His message remains timeless, because the God who called him is everlasting. Through his life and writings, Jeremiah still speaks—offering both warning and hope to those willing to listen.

Discussion Questions

1. Following Jesus and speaking the truth of what we believe may require courage and be costly at times.
 - What can we learn from the courage and dedication of Jeremiah?
 - Have you ever felt discouraged when doing what is right did not seem to make a difference?
2. In what ways are we tempted to prioritize outward religion over inward transformation? Jeremiah warned the people about their reliance on rituals while ignoring their heart condition
 - Do you think it is possible to go through the motions of church, prayer, or Bible reading without real transformation?
 - How can we shift our priorities from following religious routines to a deeper, personal relationship with God?
 - How does following Jesus help us to transform our inner self?

Discussion Questions

3. When is it the hardest to speak the truth and how can we do it with love?
Jeremiah courageously spoke out against sin, injustice, and false hope, even when it made him unpopular.
 - Have you faced situations where speaking truth cost you something – like friendships, approval, or economic benefits?
 - How can we stand for truth today without sounding harsh or judgmental?

4. How can we become agents of hope in a broken world?
Despite all the judgment he proclaimed, Jeremiah also delivered one of the Bible’s most hope filled promises – the New Covenant.
 - What role can you play in bringing hope, healing, and truth to your school, workplace, or community?
 - How does knowing God offers transformation through Christ inspire you to live differently?

APPENDIX 1

HISTORY OF JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY AND THE KINGS OF JUDAH

Year	King of Judah & Relationship	Life Events and Jeremiah's Ministry	Bible References
722 BC	King Hezekiah of the southern kingdom of Judah, 716-687 BC	The northern kingdom of Israel with its capital Samaria has been conquered and occupied by Assyria. Only the southern kingdom of Judah is left with independence	2 Kings 17
701 BC	Hezekiah	Sennacherib invades Judah; Jerusalem is spared miraculously. This event influenced many of the people in Jeremiah's time because God saved the city in King Hezekiah and Prophet Isaiah's time. The false prophets propagated the idea that as long as the Temple was in Jerusalem, God would not allow the city to fall. Jeremiah's message was, unless the people truly repented, even having the temple, would not save them.	2 Kings 18-19
687-642 BC	Manasseh	King Manasseh ruled Judah for 55 years (approx. 687-642 BC), the longest reign of any king of Judah. Promotes idolatry although he repents later in life. He was the son of Hezekiah and began ruling at age 12. Early in his reign, he was one of the most evil kings, promoting idolatry, building altars to Baal, worshiping the stars, and even sacrificing his own son. He led Judah into deep spiritual corruption, provoking God's anger.	2 Kings 21:1-18 – Focuses on his evil deeds 2 Chronicles 33:1-20 – Includes his repentance and restoration

HISTORY OF JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY AND THE KINGS OF JUDAH

Year	King of Judah & Relationship	Life Events and Jeremiah's Ministry	Bible References
		<p>Later in life, after being taken captive to Babylon by the Assyrians, he repented, prayed to God, and was restored to Jerusalem. After his return, he removed idols and restored the altar of the Lord. Unfortunately, Manasseh's evil actions for most of his life had a lasting effect on the people of Judah. They continued in the idolatry in the later years.</p>	
642-640 BC	Amon – son of Manasseh	<p>Became king at the age of 22. Did evil in the sight of the Lord, just like his father Manasseh in his earlier years. He reinstated idolatry and abandoned the reforms his father started late in life. Ruled for only 2 years.</p> <p>Was assassinated by his own officials in the palace. Conspirators were executed by the people who then placed Amon's 8-year-old son, Josiah on the throne in 640 BC.</p> <p>Josiah was chosen by the people, likely with the support of palace and temple officials loyal to the Davidic line, to preserve stability and royal continuity.</p>	2 Kings 21:19–26 2 Chronicles 33:21–25
c.647 BC	Jeremiah born c.647 BC - assuming Jeremiah was 20 years old when he was called in 627 BC	Jeremiah's father was Hilkiah, a priest. Not necessarily the same High Priest who discovered the books of the Law for Josiah. He was from Anathoth, a town in the territory of Benjamin, which was a Levitical city assigned to the priests (Joshua 21:18).	Jeremiah 1:1:

HISTORY OF JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY AND THE KINGS OF JUDAH

Year	King of Judah & Relationship	Life Events and Jeremiah's Ministry	Bible References
627 BC	Josiah – son of Amon, grand-son of Manasseh, great-grandson of Hezekiah	<p>Jeremiah is called by God in the 13th year of Josiah's reign. Begins ministry by preaching repentance, warning of judgment. Encourages the people to return to God wholeheartedly. Supports Josiah's reforms</p> <p>In the year 627 BC, Ashurbanipal, the last of the powerful Assyrian kings, died, and his death saw the rapid decline of the Assyrian Empire. In the following year, 626 BC, an independent Babylonian state was established (TTT p.8). The rise of the Babylonian Empire had a profound impact on the life and times of Jeremiah.</p>	Jeremiah 1:1–10; Jeremiah 2–3; 2 Kings 22–23; 2 Chr 34–35
622 BC	Josiah (640-609 BC)	<p>Josiah discovers the Book of the Law. Begins widespread spiritual reforms. Jeremiah preaches the need for inward change, not just outward reform. Warns of coming judgment despite reforms. Josiah supports Jeremiah. Jeremiah realizes the reforms did not go deep into the hearts of the people. Idolatry was still rampant.</p>	Jeremiah 3:6–4:4; 2 Kings 23; 2 Chr 34–35
609 BC	Josiah dies in battle	<p>King Josiah dies at Megiddo during battle against Pharaoh Neco. Josiah's son Jehoahaz briefly ascends.</p>	
609 BC	Jehoahaz 609 BC (a.k.a. Shallum) – son of Josiah; reigned 3 months; deposed by Pharaoh Neco	<p>Jehoahaz chosen by the people after Josiah's death. Pharaoh Neco deposes him and takes him to Egypt. Jeremiah prophesies he will not return from exile. Laments Josiah's death.</p>	Jeremiah 22:10–12; 2 Kings 23:31–34; Lamentations 4:20

HISTORY OF JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY AND THE KINGS OF JUDAH

Year	King of Judah & Relationship	Life Events and Jeremiah's Ministry	Bible References
609–605 BC	Jehoiakim (609-598 BC) – son of Josiah; placed on throne by Pharaoh Neco	Jehoiakim heavily taxes the people to pay Egypt. Jeremiah delivers his Temple Sermon, warning Judah of judgment if they do not repent. Officials want Jeremiah executed, but he is spared. Jeremiah warns Judah of impending divine judgment for idolatry and misplaced trust. His message grows increasingly urgent as Judah's leaders rebel against God's commands.	Jeremiah 7; 26; 2 Kings 23:35
605 BC	Jehoiakim	First Babylonian invasion. Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egypt. Daniel taken to Babylon. Jeremiah proclaims 70-year exile prophecy. Jehoiakim rejects the message. Jeremiah dictates his prophecies to Baruch. Jehoiakim burns the scroll.	Jeremiah 25; 36; Daniel 1:1–2; 2 Kings 24:1
605 BC	Jehoiakim	Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish and consolidates his power, setting the stage for the rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.	Jeremiah 46:2; 2 Kings 24:7 Babylonian Chronicles Tablet BM 21946
598 BC	Jehoiakim	Jehoiakim rebels against Babylon. Dies during siege or is killed. Jeremiah prophesied a dishonourable death, no proper burial, "buried like a donkey." Jehoiachin, succeeds his father Jehoiakim.	Jeremiah 22:18–19; 2 Kings 24:1–6

HISTORY OF JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY AND THE KINGS OF JUDAH

Year	King of Judah & Relationship	Life Events and Jeremiah's Ministry	Bible References
598–597 BC	Jehoiachin (598-597 BC) (Jeconiah/ Coniah) – son of Jehoiakim; reigned 3 months	Jeremiah prophesied Jehoiachin will be taken to Babylon and none of his descendants will rule. Babylonians besiege Jerusalem. King Jehoiachin surrenders to Nebuchadnezzar. King and many elites are taken into exile. This is the first phase of Judah's exile. Jeremiah prophesied 70 years of exile and then God would restore them (Jeremiah 29:10).	Jeremiah 22:24–30; 2 Kings 24:8–16; Ezekiel 1:1–3
597–588 BC	Zedekiah (Mattaniah) – son of Josiah; appointed by Nebuchadnezzar	<p>Zedekiah is set up as a vassal king by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah urges Zedekiah to submit to Babylon to avoid destruction. False prophets contradict him. Uses yoke symbol (Jer 27). Writes letters to exiles in Babylon (Jer 29). Zedekiah is double-minded – sometimes seeks Jeremiah, sometimes persecutes him.</p> <p>Before the fall of Jerusalem, there was growing political unrest and anti-Babylon sentiment among the leaders in Judah and neighbouring nations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egypt encouraged rebellion against Babylon, offering military support and stirring hopes that Babylon's control could be broken (Ezekiel 17:15). • Zedekiah entered into an alliance with Egypt, breaking his oath to Babylon, hoping Egypt would help Judah regain independence. • Zedekiah rebels against Babylon c.589 BC 	Jeremiah 27–29; 2 Kings 24:17–20 Lamentations 1:1–5; 2:6–9

HISTORY OF JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY AND THE KINGS OF JUDAH

Year	King of Judah & Relationship	Life Events and Jeremiah's Ministry	Bible References
		<p>Many prophets in Jerusalem gave false assurances that God would deliver the city and that Babylon would not prevail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These false messages contradicted Jeremiah's warnings and led the king and people to believe they could resist Babylon. • Jeremiah, however, consistently proclaimed God's message: submit to Babylon, for this was God's judgment (Jeremiah 27:8–11). • "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who say to you, 'You shall not serve the king of Babylon,' for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you." – Jeremiah 27:14 	
586–585 BC	Gedaliah (Governor) – appointed by Babylon after Jerusalem's fall	Babylonians install Gedaliah as the governor and allow Jeremiah to choose exile or to stay with the remnants. Jeremiah chose to stay in Judah. He lived with the remnant in Mizpah. After some time, Gedaliah is assassinated by Ishmael. People panic and flee to Egypt and they take Jeremiah,	Jeremiah 40–41; Lamentations 5
585 BC onward	No king – remnant flees to Egypt against God's warning	Jeremiah warns not to go to Egypt but is forced to go with remnant. Rebukes their continued idolatry in Egypt. Likely dies there. Laments destruction and rebellion (Lamentations 3, 4, 5).	Jeremiah 42–44; Lamentations 3–5

APPENDIX 2

SYMBOLIC OBJECTS AND VISUALS IN JEREMIAH'S PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Symbol / Object	Description & Reference	Symbolism
Almond Tree Branch	Jeremiah 1:11-12	God is watching to fulfill His word. ('Almond' sounds like 'watching' in Hebrew.)
Boiling Pot (Tilting from the North)	Jeremiah 1:13-14	Symbol of disaster coming from the north (Babylonians).
Linen Belt (Sash)	Jeremiah 13:1-11	A belt spoiled by being hidden—symbolizing Judah's pride and corruption.
Wine Jars	Jeremiah 13:12-14	People are like wine jars to be filled with drunkenness and judgment.
Potter's Clay	Jeremiah 18:1-17	God could destroy His sinful people if He so desired. This is a warning to them to repent before He is forced to bring judgment
Broken Jar (Clay Flask)	Jeremiah 19:1-13	Symbol of the destruction of Jerusalem—once shattered, cannot be repaired.
Basket of Good and Bad Figs	Jeremiah 24:1-10	Good figs = exiles God will restore; bad figs = those remaining in Jerusalem will face judgment.
Yoke of Oxen / Wooden and Iron Yoke	Jeremiah 27-28	Symbol of submission to Babylon. Hananiah breaks the wooden yoke; God replaces it with iron.
Scroll Thrown into the Euphrates	Jeremiah 51:59-64	Symbolizing Babylon's future fall and utter destruction.
Field Bought by Jeremiah	Jeremiah 32:6-15	Symbol of hope and future restoration, even during the siege.

APPENDIX 3

JEREMIAH'S LIFE EVENTS AS PROPHETIC SYMBOLS

Life Event	Reference	Symbolism
Called as a Youth	Jeremiah 1:4–10	God's sovereignty in choosing and equipping His prophet.
Not Allowed to Marry	Jeremiah 16:1–4	Symbol of coming death and lack of future for Judah.
Not to Mourn or Feast	Jeremiah 16:5–9	Illustrates coming desolation—no joy or grief because of overwhelming destruction.
Imprisonment and Beatings	Jeremiah 20:1–2; 37–38	Reflects the rejection of God's message and suffering of the faithful prophet.
Thrown into a Cistern	Jeremiah 38:6–13	A symbol of how the people tried to silence God's warning, but God delivered His servant.
Dictating Scrolls to Baruch	Jeremiah 36	Shows persistence of God's word, even when burned by the king.
Jeremiah Weeping	Multiple (e.g., Jer. 9:1; Lam. 1–5)	Reflects God's sorrow over His people's rebellion and judgment.

APPENDIX 4

BROAD MAJOR THEMES IN JEREMIAH BASED ON TEACH THE TEXT (TTT) COMMENTARY SERIES

Chapter	Theme
1 – 29	The Broken Covenant and the Consequent Judgment
1:1-19	The Call of Jeremiah
2:1-37	The Formal Lawsuit against Judah
3:1 – 4:4	The Call to Repentance
4:5 – 6:30	The Coming Babylonian Invasion
7:1 – 10:25	False Religion and its Punishment
11:1 – 29:32	The Prophet in Conflict
30 – 33	The Book of Restoration
34 – 35	Covenant Faithfulness
36 – 45	The Fall of Jerusalem and its Aftermath
46 – 51	Judgment of the Nations
52	Recapping the Fall of Jerusalem

APPENDIX 5

CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH BASED ON THE NIV CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY BIBLE

Reference from Jeremiah	Comments / Other reference
1. Jer 1:1 – 6:30	Book of Nahum speaks of Nineveh's downfall
2. Death of King Josiah Jer 22:10 - 17	2 Kings 23:28-34 2 Chronicles 35:20 – 36:4 Habakkuk 1 – 3
3. Jer 26:1 – 6 Jeremiah threatened with death	
4. Jer 7:1 – 8:3, False religion is worthless, Valley of slaughter Jer 26:7 – 24 Valley of slaughter. Previously Jehoiakim had executed a prophet, Uriah, who spoke the same words as Jeremiah. Some officials spoke in defense of Jeremiah and saved him from execution	Jer 7:31 mentions child sacrifice, probably Molek worship, in the Valley of Ben Hinnom called Topheth which Jeremiah said will one day be called the Valley of Slaughter.
5. Jer 11:1 – 17 The covenant is broken 11:19 – 23 Plot against Jeremiah	
6. Jer 12:1 – 17 Jeremiah's complaint and God's answer	
7. Jer 47:1 – 7 Message about the Philistines	
8. Jer 46:1 – 12 Message about Egypt	
9. Jer 13:1 – 14 Linen Belt and Wineskins	
10. Jer 18:1 – 17 At the potter's house	
11. Jehoiakim Resists Babylon's rule and Jeremiah writes a message but the king burns the scroll Jer 36:1 – 10	
12. Jer 25:1 – 14 Seventy years of captivity	
13. Jer 36:11 – 32 Introduces Baruch, scroll is burnt but Jeremiah writes another scroll	
14. Jer 45:1 – 5 A message to Baruch	
15. Jer 15:10 – 23 Jeremiah's complaints	
16. Jer 14:1 – 15:9 Famine and war	

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Reference from Jeremiah	Comments / Other references
17. Jer 16:1 – 17:27 Disaster	Jeremiah would be a prophet without a family 16:2
18. Jer 8:4 – 10:16 Sin and Punishment	
19. Silence in the book of Jeremiah	2 Kings 24:1 – 14 Jehoiakim's rebellion results in the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar
20. Jer 35:1 – 19 The Rekabites	
21. Jer 23:9 – 40 About the false prophets	
22. Jer 18:18 – 19:25 False prophets	
23. Jer 20:1 – 6 Jeremiah and Passhur	
24. Jer 20:7 – 18 Complaints and Praises to God	
25. Jer 22:18 – 30 Jehoiakim's death	2 Kings 24:5 – 9 Jehoiakim's death and Jehoiachin
26. Jer 13:15 – 27 Warning of Captivity	2 Kings 24:10 – 17 Jehoiachin taken to exile 2 Chronicles 36:5 – 10 From the priests' viewpoint
27. Jer 24:1 -10 Two Basket of Figs	
28. Jer 52:1 – 2 Fall of Jerusalem Jer 27:1 – 11 Judah will be under Nebuchadnezzar Jer 48:1 – 47 A message concerning Moab Jer 49:1 – 6 Concerning Ammon Jer 49:7 – 22 Concerning Edom Jer 49:23 – 27 Concerning Damascus Jer 49:28 – 33 Concerning Kedar and Hazor Jer 49:34 – 39 Concerning Elam	
29. Jer 25:15 – 38 Cup of God's wrath Jer 27:12 – 28:17	
30. Jer 28:1 – 17 Challenging the false prophet Hananiah	
31. Jer 29:1 – 32 Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles	
32. Jer 50 – 51 Jeremiah prophesies about Babylon	
33. Jer 22:1 – 9 Judgment against wicked kings	

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Reference from Jeremiah	Comments / Other references
34. Jer 34:1 – 22 Jeremiah warns Zedekiah	Zedekiah's rebellion brings Nebuchadnezzar to besiege Jerusalem
35. Jer 46:13 – 28 Nebuchadnezzar will attack Egypt	Egypt sends an army to aid Judah. Babylonians lift the siege to counter the Egyptians. There is temporary relief to Jerusalem
36. Jer 37:1 – 21 Jeremiah in Prison Jer 30:1 – 33:26 Promise of a future restoration	
37. Jer 23:1 - 8 A future righteous branch and New Covenant	
38. Jer 38:1-13 Jeremiah is put into a cistern Jer 38: 11 – 28 Zedekiah questions Jeremiah	After defeating the Egyptians, the Babylonians resume the siege of Jerusalem
39. Jer 52:7 – 11 The Fall of Jerusalem again Jer 39:1 - 7	2 Kings 25:4 – 7 2 Kings 25:8 – 21
40. Jer 52:12 – 27 Nebuzaradan commander of the Babylonian army destroys and plunder the temple Jer 39:8 – 10 Nebuzaradan takes another batch of exiles	2 Chronicles 36:17 – 21 The Fall of Jerusalem written by the priests
41. Lamentations 1 – 5 The lamentations of Jeremiah over the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple	
42. Jer 39:11 – 19 Gedaliah is appointed governor of Judah	
43. Jer 40:1 – 6 Jeremiah is freed Jer 40:7 – 41:15 Gedaliah is assassinated	
44. Jer 41:16 – 43:13 Jeremiah is taken against his will to Egypt	
45. Jer 44:1 – 30 There will be disaster because of idolatry	
46. Jer 44:30 The Pharaoh Hophrah was only a 'loud noise'	

APPENDIX 5

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