

Old Testament Survey
Lesson 24 – Jeremiah
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
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OT Survey Review

Timelines of the Kings and Prophets During the Exiles

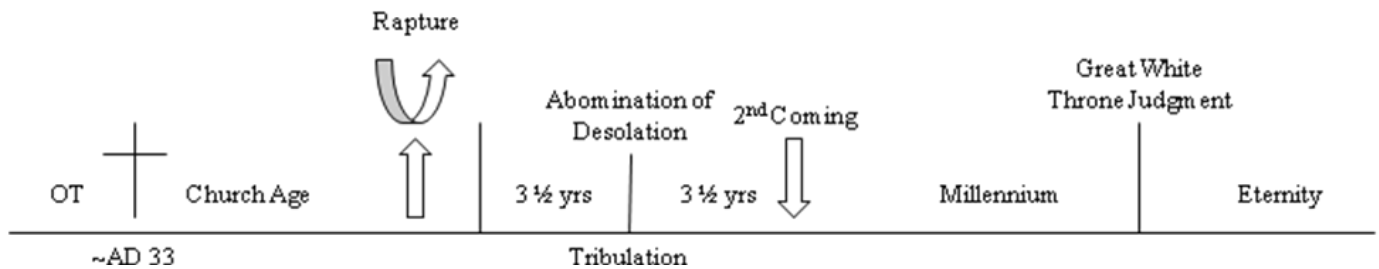
Judah		Prophet	Israel	
740-732	Jotham	740-680 Isaiah		
			742-740	Pekahiah
			740-732	Pekah
735-715	Ahaz	740-686 Micah		
			732-722	Hoshea
			722	Israel Falls to Assyria
715-686	Hezekiah			
697-642	Manasseh			
		ca. 650 Nahum		
642-640	Amon			
640-609	Josiah			
		635-610 Zephaniah		
		627-561 Jeremiah		
		ca. 609 Habakkuk		
609	Jehoahaz			
609-598	Jehoiakim			
605	Exile: Stage #1 Daniel and a few taken captive to Babylon	605-536 Daniel		
598-597	Jehoiachin			
597	Exile: Stage #2 10,000 Jews taken captive to Babylon			
597-586	Zedekiah			
		593-570 Ezekiel		
586	Judah Falls to Babylon (Exile: Stage #3 Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem)			
539	Babylon falls to the Medo-Persians (Daniel 5)			
538	Return: Stage #1 50,000 Jews return under Zerubbabel & Joshua	ca. 520 Zechariah		
		520-518 Haggai		
516	Completion of 2nd Temple			
458	Return: Stage #2 2,000 Jews return under Ezra to restore worship			
445	Return: Stage #3 Nehemiah returns to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem	433-424 Malachi		

Eschatology Overview

The Scriptures are clear that all people, without miraculous intervention – e.g. Enoch (Gen 5:24, Heb 11:5), Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), and raptured believers (1 Thess 4:17), will taste death and judgment (Heb 9:27-28). This death is the end of physical life when the soul is separated from the body (James 2:26) with no loss of consciousness (Luke 16:19-31; Rev 6:9-11).

The outcome of the judgment is based on acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior which is manifested in a changed life. In the end there are two eternal (or final) states for all mankind: heaven or hell (Matt 25:26; Dan 12:2). The believer's hope is that we will be alive to see the return of the King.

The return of Jesus is a prominent doctrine in Scripture. Evangelicals all hold that Christ will return, though they differ, sometimes significantly, on the details. The diagram below presents the premillennial second coming and pretribulation rapture position held by VBC.



The rapture is the event when the Lord will come in the air for His saints: the dead in Christ will be resurrected, living believers will be changed to their glorified state, and both will meet Christ to ascend to heaven (1 Thess 4:13-5:11; 1 Cor 15:51-57; John 14:1-3). The pretribulation rapture view holds that the rapture occurs before the seven year tribulation because: 1) the church is promised to be kept from the hour of trouble (Rev 3:10); 2) the restrainer (the Holy Spirit) will be removed requiring the removal of believers (2 Thess 2); 3) the wrath of God will be poured out in the tribulation and the church is exempt from wrath (Rev 6:17; cf. 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9); and 4) the rapture is imminent (1 Thess 5:6).

The tribulation is a seven year period (Dan 9:24-27) that begins when the Antichrist signs a seven year peace treaty with Israel (Dan 9:27) and ends with Christ's return at the battle of Armageddon. The tribulation is a time of judgment upon the unbelieving world (Jer 30:7; Dan 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thess 2:7-12; Rev 6; 8-9; 16) and persecution of Israel (Matt 24:9; 22; Rev 12:17) by the Antichrist. A chronology of this period is:

- Rapture at an unspecified time (1 Thess 4-5)
- Tribulation begins with the signing of a seven year peace treaty with Israel (Dan 9:27)
- Tribulation (Rev 6, 8-9, 11, 16)
- The battle of Armageddon (Rev 16)
- Jesus the Christ returns (Rev 19)

The millennial kingdom is Christ's foretold messianic kingdom when He will reign on the earth for one thousand years (Rev 20:1-7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Christ over all the nations of the earth (Ezek 37:21-28; Dan 7:17-22; Rev 19:11-16). The living believers at the end of the tribulation will be those who populate the millennial kingdom. The kingdom will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isa 11; 65:17-25; Ezek 36:33-38). Satan will be bound for the duration of the millennium and released at the end for a final confrontation with Christ where he will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:1-10).

All those who have sinned will come under judgment: Believers will be judged after the rapture according to their works done since the time of salvation (1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Cor 5:10). This is the Judgment Seat of Christ. OT believers will probably be judged at the end of the tribulation (Dan 12:1-3). The Gentiles living when Christ returns to set up His kingdom will be judged with the believers entering the kingdom and the unbelievers being cast into the lake of fire (Matt 25:31-46; Joel 3:2). Israel will be judged at the second coming based on their acceptance of the Messiah. The saved will enter the kingdom and the unsaved will be cast into the lake of fire (Ezek 20:37-38). The fallen angels will be judged probably after the millennium and be cast into the lake of fire (Matt 25:41; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Rev 20:10). All the unsaved dead will be judged after the millennium before the Great White Throne and be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15).

There are two general categories of resurrections: the first resurrection (resurrection of the just or of life) and the second resurrection (resurrection of the unjust or of condemnation). The first resurrection includes the dead in Christ who are raised at the rapture (1 Thess 4:16), the tribulation martyrs (Rev 20:4-5), and the OT saints (Dan 12:2) at either the rapture or the second coming. The second resurrection includes the unsaved dead of all time and will occur at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15).

After the rapture, tribulation, second coming, millennium, and Great White Throne judgment the eternal state will be ushered in (Rev 21). The current universe will be destroyed with intense heat (2 Pet 3:10) and replaced with a new earth (Rev 21:1). The new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2) will come down out of heaven and be the dwelling place of the saints (Rev 21-22). The focus of the eternal state is the fellowship of the redeemed with their Creator (Rev 21:3-4; 22-27; Rev 22: 1-5).

Introduction to the Book of Jeremiah

In the midst of monumental international turmoil, in which three great dynasties collided, God's chosen nation struggled to survive. The mighty Assyrian Empire succumbed to a young and virile Babylonian, which in turn confronted an old and powerful Egyptian. Compared to Jeremiah, Isaiah was a popular prophet. Comparing Isaiah's time with Jeremiah's:

- Isaiah lived through the turbulent Assyrian period.
- Jeremiah lived through the equally depressing Babylonian period.
- In Isaiah's time, Israel was carried into captivity.
- In Jeremiah's time Judah suffered the same fate.
- Isaiah with the godly King Hezekiah and was surrounded by the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Micah.
- Jeremiah served with righteous King Josiah and was contemporary with Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Obadiah.

The book is named Jeremiah because he wrote it (1:1). Verse 1:1 says, "*The words of Jeremiah, ...*" leaving no doubt who wrote the book. His name means, "The Lord throws down, or lays down, a foundation." It is a very personal book, as Jeremiah tells much of his life, ministry, people, troubles, and even shares his personal feelings. No other prophet has revealed as much of himself and his heart. This book is one of the best documented pieces of OT writing since much of its history, including names, places, and dates is also recorded in the *Babylonian Chronicles* (626-594 BC), the *Lachish Letters*, and many other tablets found in Babylonian ruins.

Introducing the Prophet

The first chapter introduces Jeremiah very well. His father, Hilkiah, was a priest and so he was from the order of Aaron and the tribe of Levi, but we have no record that Jeremiah ever trained for or practiced that office. He was born in a small town called Anathoth (Jer 1:1), about three miles northwest of Jerusalem. His call was determined before his birth (1:5) and he entered into prophetic ministry somewhat reluctantly (1:6) as a very young man, probably between 14 and 20 years of age (much like Samuel). He was commissioned of God to be a prophet (Jer 1:9-10) and his message broke his own heart (Jer 9:1). He began his ministry during the reign of King Josiah and was a mourner at his funeral (2 Chron. 35:25). He was forbidden to marry because of the terrible times in which he lived (Jer 16:1-4). His entire ministry was marked with persecution and trial, but he was faithful, prophesying in Jerusalem, even after Babylon carried most of the people away. He never made a convert. He was rejected by his people (Jer 11:18-21; 12:6; 18:18), hated, beaten, put in stocks (Jer 20:1-3), imprisoned, and charged with being a traitor (Jer 37:11-16). He wanted to resign, but God would not let him (Jer 20:9). He saw the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity. He was permitted to remain in the land by the captain of the Babylonian forces. When the remnant wanted to flee to Egypt, Jeremiah prophesied against it (Jer 42:15-43:3). He, himself, was eventually carried away to Egypt by force by the remnant (Jer 43:6-7). There are two traditions that describe Jeremiah's death: 1) he was recaptured in Egypt by Babylon in 568 BC and lived to finish his writing as late as 561 BC and died at age 85 to 90 and 2) he was stoned in Egypt by the remnant.

Jeremiah seems to have been a weak man who God had to motivate by sharp threats rather than words of comfort, but he was loyal. No matter how weak and whiny he seemed when alone with God, he stood strong before the leaders of his day, whether Judah's or their enemies. He was, by earthly standards, a failure. He wept out his prophecies to people who would not listen. His writings were torn to shreds. His name was disgraced. He was beaten. He was put in stocks, thrown in a pit, and for much of his life he was a hunted man. He lived to see his nation in famine and war and all of his worst predictions came true before his eyes. When Jeremiah knew Babylon was going to invade and understood that it was God's punishment and could not be avoided, he encouraged Judah, and several other nations not to resist, but rather avoid total devastation. That and a temple address (7:1-8:3) which predicted the destruction of the temple, earned him the ultimate title of "Traitor."

Even when King Josiah led in a religious revival, he could see it would not last among a people steeped in corruption and idolatry. When Josiah died, he barely escaped arrest, was forbidden to enter the temple, and had to have his scribe, Baruch, deliver his prophecies. He is often called the "weeping prophet," and his bitterest heartache was poured out in his other book, Lamentations, which means "loud cry."

Introducing the Times

To place Jeremiah in his proper place in history we must refer to 2 Kings 21-25 and 2 Chron 34-36. Second Kings records the lowest point in Hebrew history. The tragic end of that tragic time is the setting for the Book of Jeremiah. They are on a "slippery slope" to destruction. The last king in Judah during Isaiah's time was Hezekiah, one of the best kings ever. His son, Manasseh and his grandson Amon, however, were both evil men who encouraged gross idolatry including child sacrifice to Molech. Jeremiah was also combating hypocrisy, dishonesty, adultery, injustice, and tyranny against the helpless for over forty years.

The world power, Assyria, had just carried Israel into captivity and had also threatened Judah for a long time, even capturing or destroying many of their cities. It was only by the grace of God, and His supernatural intervention that Jerusalem was spared. When eight-year-old Josiah followed Amon to the throne, bringing over thirty years of revival and righteous rule, Judah was already a virtual vassal province of Assyria. Babylon led by King Nabopolassar, finally overpowered Assyria in 609 BC, inherited the rights to Judah, and determined to capture its capital Jerusalem.

Judah had become a buffer state between Egypt and Babylon, so whatever happened, there would be war and devastation from both sides. In fact, King Josiah died at Megiddo trying to stop the Egyptian army from crossing Judah to help Assyria in a battle in Carchemish. He was succeeded by his sons: First Jehoahaz, who lasted only three months before he was deposed by Pharaoh Necho. Then Necho placed Josiah's other son, Jehoiakim, in as a puppet ruler who reigned for eleven years (609-598 BC). It was under his rule that the transfer of power to Babylon occurred and he paid tribute, first to Assyria, then to Egypt, and then to Babylon. Jehoiakim, an evil idolater, was a bitter enemy of Jeremiah.

Sometime later, Jehoiakim stopped paying tribute and declared Judah's independence. In response, Babylon captured Jerusalem, not destroying it, but carrying some of their top citizens into captivity (March 15 and 16, 597 BC). Among this first group of captives was Daniel and his three friends. Jehoiachin succeeded his father to the throne, but within three months, Babylon removed him from power and placed Zedekiah (his uncle) in his place. They thought Zedekiah would be more controllable. That was a mistake, because Zedekiah carried on a series of conspiracies against Babylon for over eleven years, which finally lead to the violent overthrow of he and his kingdom. The book of Lamentations is a record of this time. Jerusalem was flattened, the temple sacked and burned, Zedekiah was captured, blinded, and deported to Babylon with many of his people, and surprisingly, Jeremiah was freed. All of this comprised the initiating events leading to the period known throughout history as the Babylonian Captivity in 586 BC.

Outline of Jeremiah

The Book of Jeremiah is not always arranged in chronological order, but is arranged for thematic effect.

I. **The Call of Jeremiah (Chapter 1)**

Jeremiah is called during the 13th year of Josiah, king of Judah as a young man. He continued in his ministry until 586 BC when the Babylonians destroyed the temple and Jerusalem.

Dates	King of Judah	References
640-609 BC	Josiah	2 Kg 22:1-23:30; 2 Ch 34:1-36
609 BC	Jehoahaz	2 Kg 23:31-35; 2 Ch 36:2-4
609-598 BC	Jehoiakim	2 Kg 23:36-24:7; 2 Ch 36:5-8
605 BC	Exile: Stage #1 Daniel and a few taken captive to Babylon	
598-597 BC	Jehoiachin	2 Kg 24:8-17; 2 Ch 36:9-10
597 BC	Exile: Stage #2 10,000 Jews taken captive to Babylon	
597-586 BC	Zedekiah	2 Kg 24:18-20; 2 Ch 36:11-14
586 BC	Exile: Stage #3 Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem	

Jeremiah was called as a prophet before he was born. Jeremiah feels inadequate because of his youthfulness. The Lord reassures him and calms him with the promise that He is with Jeremiah. His message is one of destruction (pluck up and break down, destroy and overthrow) and mercy (build and plant). The Lord then give two figures which confirm His care and then judgment from the north. Jeremiah is then charged by God:

¹⁷"Now, gird up your loins and arise, and speak to them all which I command you Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them. ¹⁸"Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests and to the people of the land. ¹⁹"They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD. Jer 1:17-19

II. **Prophecies to Judah (Chapters 2-45)**

These chapters contain several pronouncements from God that rightly accuse Judah of willful disobedience and apostasy. The subject of these messages is their coming destruction and how they deserve judgment, yet there is a thread of hope for future renewal.

A. **Judah's Willful Sin (2-6)**

1. **Reasons for Judgment**

Earlier Israel had faithfully followed the Lord and enjoyed His protection. Now they had forgotten Him and turned to pagan idols. Even the priests, leaders, and prophets had fallen (2). The Lord compared Judah to a prostitute and a good grapevine grown wild with no hope short of punishment. The people accused the Lord of being unfair and He responded that they were even worse than Israel who was already in exile for their sins. He called them to confession with promises of blessing if they would repent and return (3).

2. **Form of Judgment**

The alternative to repentance was judgment in the form of a mighty army "*I am bringing evil from the north, And great destruction.*" which would bring terror and destruction to the land (4). Just to make it clear, Jeremiah reviews the reasons for the impending judgment. Rebellion, disobedience, idolatry, immorality, exploitation of the poor, all things God hates. They "*refused to take correction; They have made their faces harder than rock; They have refused to repent*" (5). Even in the face of a graphic and terrifying depiction of the coming attack and siege, the people refuse to respond, and God says, "*They, all of them, are corrupt.*" (6:28).

B. Judah's Wrong Religion (7-10)

1. Hypocrisy

The people thought they were safe because the temple was in their capital city. There was no magic power in the Ark of the Covenant in the wilderness and there was none in the temple building. The "Temple Sermon" would set them straight on that fact (7). Jeremiah is ordered to not pray for Judah and Jeremiah describes Judah in terms that could describe us today.

¹⁶"As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you. Jer 7:16

²⁴"Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Jer 7:24

Not only do they play at worshiping the true God in the temple, but they also worship pagan gods with perverse rituals. Having the law and living the law are different, and so the Lord will bring judgment on the people (8 and 9). Here is the classic passage concerning boasting:

²³Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD. Jer 9:23-24

2. Stupidity (10)

God sends a message comparing their silly idols with the Lord. Jeremiah's heart is wrenched as he watches them reject the message.

⁶There is none like You, O LORD; You are great, and great is Your name in might. ⁷Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You. ⁸But they are altogether stupid and foolish In their discipline of delusion--their idol is wood! ... ¹⁰But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King At His wrath the earth quakes, And the nations cannot endure His indignation. Jer 10:6-8, 10

C. Judah's Wandering Heart (Breaking God's Covenant) (11-13)

1. Judah Abandons God (11)

The fact is, Judah had turned its back on the Lord. They had broken the covenant. The covenant relationship between Israel and their God had been restated over and over, and again they chose to follow other gods. That alone was a sufficient breach of the covenant to bring curses upon them. The people turned violently on Jeremiah and God vows to protect him.

2. God Abandons Judah (12)

God reacted by abandoning Judah and allowing their enemies to desolate their land, *but* He promised to reclaim them and punish their enemies as well.

3. Sign of the Linen Belt (13:1-27)

God instructed Jeremiah to buy, wear, and then bury a linen waistband by the Euphrates River. Many days later he had the prophet dig up the belt, which was now rotten and worthless. Just as a man wore a fine decorative belt to bring glory and compliments to him, God intended His people to be a source of glory and honor to him.

¹¹For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me,' declares the LORD, 'that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen.' Jer 13:11

But their pride, stubbornness, wallowing in the mire and hypocrisy would bring rot and ruin to them just as the moist ground had rotted and ruined the belt. Is there much hope that they will change? *"Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard his spots. Then you also can do good who are accustomed to do evil."* (v23)

D. Sign of the Drought (14-15)

Jeremiah lamented over a severe drought which engulfed the land and prayed a prayer of confession and request for aid. The Lord responded by pointing to the wickedness rampant in the land and refusing to accept their hypocritical sacrifices. Jeremiah continued to intercede, but it was to no avail. God responded that even Moses or Samuel interceding could not help. The sins of perverse idolatry, introduced by King Manasseh years before, were still being practiced and that meant death, war, famine, and captivity (14). Jeremiah questioned God's dependability, but God in His grace assured him of continued divine protection. He confessed his sins of doubt and continued his difficult mission (15). In Jeremiah's prayer, he tells of his dedication to God's word:

¹⁶Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. Jer 15:15

E. Sign of the Unmarried Prophet (16-17)

The restrictions that God placed on Jeremiah foreshadowed the events of the coming judgment to Judah. His aloneness, which in the Hebrew world was a big deal or even a curse, would illustrate the devastating effect of the coming events on families. Many were going to lose husbands, wives, and children. He was also restricted from attending funerals or celebrations to illustrate that there would not be time or chance to mourn or celebrate, such would be the scope of the disasters (16). The reason for the judgment is clear:

¹²You too have done evil, even more than your forefathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me. Jer 16:12

Again, the message points out the why. Idolatry and wickedness would bring forfeit of the Promised Land, death, and slavery. God contrasts the wicked and the righteous, reminding them that the righteous remnant would be blessed even in the midst of the crisis. Jeremiah prayed again, calling on God's omniscience and justice, re-affirming his commitment to his task and asking for vindication before his persecutors (17).

⁵Thus says the LORD, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the LORD. ⁶"For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant. ⁷"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. ⁸"For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit. "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? ¹⁰"I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds. Jer 17:5-10

The end of chap 17 is a sermon aimed at exhorting the whole nation to repent and demonstrate their loyalty to God by observing the Sabbath.

F. Sign of the Potter's House (18-19:13)

The Lord sent Jeremiah to a potter's house for an object lesson that illustrated His ultimate control over Judah. As the potter was shaping the pot, it was "spoiled" so the potter just reshaped the spoiled pot into a different style pot. "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel." (v6) God is willing to reshape the pot according to the peoples' response. If they continue to rebel He will allow that marring to bring a reshaping by judgment, forming them for another purpose. If they repent, He is more than willing to reshape them into a useful vessel (18).

As an addendum to that sign message, God had Jeremiah go to the potter's house, buy a earthenware jar and deliver it to the elders and some of the senior priests. Next, he was to take them to the Valley of Ben Himmon, proclaim a prophecy of judgment for their child-sacrificing idolatry, and then smash the jar illustrating God's plan for the city of Jerusalem (19).

G. Jeremiah in Stocks (19:14-20:18)

After breaking the jar before the leaders of Judah, Jeremiah went to the temple and delivered another pronouncement of coming-judgment. Pashur, the priest and chief officer, had him beaten and put in stocks for public humiliation. When released, Jeremiah renamed him Magor-Missabib, meaning "terror on every side," and predicted that he would witness death and exile of his friends and be buried in a foreign land. Jeremiah considered himself in a no-win situation. If he spoke the prophecy he was persecuted and if he did not the message burned within him (20).

H. Messages to Judah's Kings

1. Zedekiah (21:1-22:9) – Zedekiah asks Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord if He would deliver Judah from Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Jeremiah not only says that Judah would not be delivered, but that the Lord Himself would fight against them. Zedekiah led a final revolt against Babylon, against the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah and bringing a siege that led to the starvation and eventual burning of Jerusalem. Zedekiah was forced to watch his sons executed and then his eyes were put out so the memory would remain, then led into captivity.
2. Jehoahaz (Shullum) (22:11-12) – Jehoahaz would be taken into captivity and die there. He was deposed by Pharaoh Necho
3. Jehoiakim (22:18-19) - Was made Necho's puppet king and resisted the word of the Lord by burning Jeremiah's scroll that warned of Judah's coming slavery.
4. Jehoiachin (Coniah or Jeconiah) (22:20-30) – Jehoiakim's son rebelled against Babylon which brought Nebuchadnezzar back to Jerusalem where he deposed Jehoiachin and stripped Jerusalem and the Temple and took the royal family and leading citizens of the city to Babylon.
5. Messiah (23:1-8) – In contrast to all the kings who have led the people away from God, one day God will provide the Messiah.

⁵"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶"In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.' ⁷"Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when they will no longer say, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,' ⁸but, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.' Then they will live on their own soil." Jer 23:5-8

I. Judah's False Prophets (23)

This sermon chides the civic and spiritual leaders for being evil shepherds who misled and misfed their people. The so-called prophets were spiritually and morally bankrupt.

J. Sign of the Figs (24)

After the exile of Jehoiachin in 557 BC, the Lord gave Jeremiah this object lesson. God showed him two baskets of figs. *"One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten due to rotteness."* (v2) The good figs represented the early deportees who were already in exile in Babylon. God was committed to protecting them and restore them to the land. The bad figs represented the evil Zedekiah and his officials who were still in Jerusalem or had fled to Egypt. God was committed to humiliating them and eventually destroying them.

K. Captivity (25)

This sermon reminds the people of their sin, the severity and duration of the judgment. *"... this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."* (v11) Seventy years of missed Sabbaths brings seventy years of captivity. This is the prophecy that alerted the prophet Daniel to the fact that his people's punishment was coming to an end and was the foundation for his prayers.

¹In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans-- ²in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. ³So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. Dan 9:1-3

L. Uriah Murdered (26:20-24)

Jeremiah was fortunate to have God protecting him when He prophesied the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. At the same time he was spared from the threat of the mob in the temple, one of his fellow prophets, Uriah, was extradited from Egypt and killed by King Jehoiakim.

M. Sign of the Yokes (27-28)

Early in Zedekiah's reign Jeremiah stood against the false prophets who were preaching hope and peace. He followed God's instruction and placed an oxen yoke over his neck to illustrate that the promised slavery was coming. The bottom line of this prophecy was Jeremiah's advice to Judah to submit to the inevitable conquest of King Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. The basis for this advice was the God-given knowledge that captivity was inevitable. His point was, since it is going to happen anyway, why not save lives by surrendering rather than go through an attack and deadly siege (27). At the same time, a false prophet, Hananiah, confronted Jeremiah in the temple declaring that within two years God would deliver Judah. Hananiah removed the yoke and broke it, but Jeremiah stated that the yoke God had placed on Judah was an unbreakable yoke of iron. Then, just as a prophet test, he predicted Hananiah would die within the year and he did (28).

N. Deportees (29)

This sermon was in a letter written to the captives already in Babylon. He encouraged them to settle down, marry, have kids, and pray for prosperity as they waited to return in seventy years.

¹⁰"For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. ¹¹**'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.** ¹²'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴'I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.' Jer 29:10-14

O. Jacob's Trouble (30)

This sermon talks of the return of Judah and Israel to "the Land" following great judgment. It applies to more than just then, however, and defines the great tribulation to come just before the Messiah comes to set up the kingdom. We know this, because verse 9 speaks of the "New David," The Messiah who will be king.

P. Last Days and a New Covenant (31)

That sermon continues as chapter 31 carries on the theme culminating in a glorious promise of a new covenant and a new prosperity, in a New Kingdom, in which Jerusalem would be rebuilt and never again destroyed.

Q. Jeremiah in Prison (32:1-5)

The army of Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem (588 BC) and Zedekiah locked Jeremiah in the guardhouse to keep him from influencing the people not to fight. He was again protected by God and lived to prophesy another day.

R. Sign of the Field of Hanameel (32:6-44)

When Jeremiah's cousin Hanameel came to visit, Jeremiah, following God's instructions redeemed his field according to the ancient law (Lev 25). When he asked God why He told him to do that, knowing Babylon was going to own it all anyway. God's response was, "*Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me? ... I am about to give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.*" (v27-28) But, God explained, "*Behold, I will gather them out of the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety.*" (v37). This was God's promise that His chosen people will return to the promised land.

S. Millennium (33)

The word of the Lord continued to come to Jeremiah while he was confined in the court of the guard with a reaffirmation of the Davidic covenant which included: a promised land in peace and prosperity; a permanent throne of David in Jerusalem; and a king from the tribe of Judah in the line of David on that throne. This is the Millennial kingdom with the Messiah on the throne.

T. Prophecy to Zedekiah (34)

Jeremiah once again tell Zedekiah that the end is near and to not fight against God's plan of judgment.

U. Sign of the Rechabites (35)

During the reign of Jehoiakim, the Lord had Jeremiah invite a Rachabite family to the temple. The Rachabites were descendants of Jonadab, a zealous man of God and an opponent of Baal worship (2 Kings 10). For over 200 years the family had obeyed their ancestors' instructions to live an ascetic life-style including total abstinence. When Jeremiah placed the wine before them, they still refused. The lesson was clear: their obedience stood in stark contrast to the disobedience of Judah. They would obey 200 years after their instruction, while Judah would not even obey the Lord's living prophets. It was just one more argument in favor of justice being served.

V. Jeremiah's Prophecy Destroyed (36)

The Lord instructed Jeremiah to record all His prophecies on a scroll. He dictated them to Baruch, his scribe, and had him take them to the temple on an official fast day and read them to the people. Word got back to King Jehoiakim, and he personally cut the scroll into pieces and burned it. He next ordered the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch, but they went into hiding, writing another copy of the prophecies.

W. Jeremiah in Prison, Again (37-39)

This and the following events happened in the final days of Judah's freedom. Zedekiah became Jeremiah's main nemesis. Later, during the siege, the Babylonian main force left to face an attack by Judah's ally, Egypt. Jeremiah told the king that this rest was only temporary and that Babylon would repel Egypt and then destroy Jerusalem. Zedekiah again arrested him, this time for treason, and sentenced him to a long stay in the deep dungeon. Eventually he was brought back to the king to report, but since God's word had not changed he was sent to the guardhouse (37-38). The siege was successful and in 586 BC Jerusalem fell. Zedekiah ran but was captured and Nebuchadnezzar who had his sons killed before him (the last sight he would remember) and had him blinded (39).

X. Events after the Fall of Jerusalem (40-45)

1. The Remnant (40-42)

After the fall of Jerusalem there was much turmoil in Judah. Jeremiah encouraged the poor remnant left behind in Jerusalem to stay and work the land and assured them of God's favor and protection, that Babylon would treat them mercifully, and their people would return.

2. Jeremiah in Jerusalem (43-44)

The Babylonians sacked and destroyed Jerusalem, taking most of its population into exile, leaving only the old, weak, and poor. Jeremiah was given the option of going to Babylon or staying in Jerusalem. He chose to stay and minister to the remnant left in Judah. He was then taken to Egypt where he tells the people that Nebuchadnezzar is coming to conquer Egypt.

3. Jeremiah Ministers to Baruch (45:1-5)

The last message from Jeremiah was a personal encouragement to his scribe, Baruch. It advised him not to seek a high post in the government since the land was to be judged, and assured him that the Lord would take care of him throughout the coming storm.

III. Messages of Sorrows (Chapters 46-52)

The concluding section of the Book of Jeremiah is a summary of the judgments to come against all nations involved in this historical era: First, the enemy nations surrounding, hounding and warring against Israel and Judah, even though they were God's own instruments of discipline, will still be judged. Second, Jerusalem was judged because of the long standing idolatry and apostasy of its rulers, priests, and people.

A. Prophecy Against Neighbors (46-51)

1. Conquests of Babylon (46-49)

One by one the enemies of God and his people will fall. A list that reads like the Who's Who of mighty nations: Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus (Syria), Arabia, and Elam. All will fall under God's hand.

2. Collapse of Babylon (50-51)

The great world-conquering power falls as well, and the mighty idol, Marduk would be unable to help. The description of the Babylonians reeling as drunkards and slaughtered like sheep accurately describes that fateful night when Belshazzar and his nobles partied with the implements from God's temple and were helpless to stop Cyrus as he diverted the river and entered the city to defeat them.

B. Prophecy Against Jerusalem (52)

This chapter is a parallel of the account in 2 Kings 24 and 25. It gives a detailed account of the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon and confirms the message of Jeremiah. It is also the reason we have Jeremiah's lament in our next book.

Lessons

1. The detailed fulfillment of prophecy is a major proof that the Bible is a supernatural and trustworthy book.
2. Sin and disobedience bring consequences.
3. God is longsuffering and full of mercy, but on-going sin will lead to just punishment.

We saw that for Israel and Judah, sin brought about judgment. God never disowns His chosen people, but He does discipline them. The same is true with the believer today.

The result of sin in the believer's life is loss of fellowship (1 John 1:6); church discipline (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:4-5); the Lord's discipline (Heb 12:6); and sometimes physical death (1 Cor 11:30).

Homework

- Read the Book of Lamentations