

#20. JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

1. **Jeremiah, son of Hilkiyah the Priest**, was a priest and prophet to Judah who ministered in Jerusalem in the final years before the city fell to Babylon. The end of his ministry in Jerusalem marks the beginning of the Babylonian Exile, also known as the Seventy Years of Captivity.

2. **The author of both books is Jeremiah.** He was an influential prophet during the administration of the five last kings of Judah. He was faithful to God while enduring threats, imprisonment, and humiliating abuse.
 - His home was Anathoth, a village about three miles north of Jerusalem. It was an agricultural town, and also provided quarried stones for buildings in Jerusalem. The present day city has almost 10,000 inhabitants, while the town in Jeremiah's era may have been home to about 100.
 - The backstory of Jeremiah is reported in 2 Kings 22-25 and 2 Chronicles 34-36.
 - In his writings, we are allowed to see more of Jeremiah's personal life than most any other prophet. His name means "Jehovah throe, or casts" in the sense of establishing a foundation. He remained unmarried, as an object lesson to Judah (16:1-4), and was assisted in ministry by a Scribe named Baruch (36:4,32; 45:1).
 - Jeremiah is known as "The Weeping Prophet" because of his passionate intercession and brokenness for Jerusalem (9:1; 13:17; 14:17).
 - Once it became evident that Judah would not repent, and that invasion was certain, Jeremiah advised the people to submit to Babylon (chapter 27) in order to avoid total devastation.
 - The Sins of Judah were deep and many. Idol worship continued, and a system of child-sacrifice had continued sporadically since the days of King Ahaz who reigned in the time of Isaiah (735-715 B.C.). Hezekiah stopped the practice, but it was reinstated during Manasseh's reign and had continued until Jeremiah's day (see 7:31; 19:5; 32:35). King Josiah initiated reform, but the bad habits of Judah were deeply entrenched. Social injustices, moral depravity and general wickedness was the norm in Jerusalem.
 - The political scene in Jeremiah's day was challenging as well. Assyrian power had diminished to the point that Nineveh was conquered in 612 B.C. as predicted by the prophet Nahum. In the power-vacuum, Babylon rose to prominence by defeating Assyria, Egypt and Israel (612-605 B.C.).
 - In addition to Jeremiah, the leading prophets of this period were Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Daniel and Ezekiel.

- The rest of the Bible quotes Jeremiah (aka Jeremy in the New Testament) at least seven times (Daniel 9:2; Matthew 2:18; Matthew 27:9; 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17; Hebrews 8:8-12; Hebrews 10:16,17).

3. The Date of the writings were scattered throughout the ministry of Jeremiah (627-570 B.C.). The compilation of Jeremiah was obviously not completed until after 586 B.C., but it is likely that Baruch had been collecting the material for years. The date for Lamentations was probably after the compilation of Jeremiah, but not long after the destruction. The city fell in mid-July, and the Temple was destroyed in mid-August. Jeremiah's forced departure to Egypt was probably in 583 B.C., so we know the date of compilation was after 586 B.C., but before 583 B.C.

4. Key Chapters

- **Chapters 1-45 of Jeremiah** are mostly about God's judgment on Judah for her spiritual adultery.
- **Chapters 46-52 of Jeremiah** deal with coming judgment on the surrounding nations, as well as the actual fall of Jerusalem.
- **Lamentations 1** is Jeremiah's funeral dirge for the city.
- **Lamentations 2** is a song about The Lord's anger over sin.
- **Lamentations 3** deals with hope in the midst of affection.
- **Lamentations 4** states the purpose of The Lord has been done. His anger with Judah is satisfied. The countdown for hope begins.
- **Lamentations 5** is Jeremiah's appeal for continued mercy and restoration.

5. Key Verses

- **Jeremiah 1:4-9 NASB** - Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."⁶ Then I said, "Alas, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth."⁷ But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak."⁸ "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord."⁹ Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth."

6. Key People

- **Jeremiah** - prophet, priest and author of both books.
- **Hilkiah** - the Father of Jeremiah. Some think he may have the same Hilkiah who discovered the lost book of The Law in the days of Josiah, but there is no proof that this was so.
- **Josiah (640-609 B.C.), Jehoahaz (609 B.C.), Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.), Jehoiachin (598-597 B.C.) and Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.)** were the five kings who reigned over Judah during the days of Jeremiah.
- **Baruch** - a Scribe, close friend and assistant to Jeremiah.

7. Key Places

- **Anathoth** was the hometown of Jeremiah. It was a priestly village given to Sons of Aaron (Joshua 21:13,18).
- **Babylon** was the capitol city of Judah's opposing force, Babylon. By this time, both Ezekiel and Daniel are residents of Babylon.
- **Jerusalem** was the scene of almost all of Jeremiah's ministry.
- **Egypt** was a desired haven for many Jews, but Jeremiah advised strongly against it (Jeremiah 42,43). Though Jeremiah was essentially forced into Egypt (chapters 43,44) at the end of his ministry, even there he prophesied against the move.
- **Ramah** was a town where the captives were assembled before being taken to Babylon (Jeremiah 40:1).

8. Key Themes

- ***The sin of God's people cannot be overlooked.***
- ***The Promised Land is God's gift to obedient children, not rebellious ones.***
- ***God's chastisement is redemptive in nature.***
- ***God will hear the cries of His people (Lamentations).***

- ***In the darkest of times (Lamentations), God's steadfast love and mercy is renewed daily - there is always hope!***

9. The Contents of Jeremiah and Lamentations

- ***The call of Jeremiah (1:1-19)***
- ***The Word of The Lord to Judah (21:1-45:5)***
 - ***Judah has sinned (2:1-29:32)***
 - *Message #1 - Jehovah's Case Against Judah - Jeremiah 2:1-3:5*
 - *Message #2 - Judah Has Followed Her Sister Israel - Jeremiah 3:6-6:30*
 - *Message #3. - Jeremiah's Message at The Temple - Jeremiah 7:1-10:25*
 - *Message #4. - Jeremiah Decries the Rotting Moral Fiber of Judah: A Call for Justice and Mercy - Jeremiah 11:1-13:27*
 - *Message #5. - Jeremiah's Personal Matters as Judgment Looms - Jeremiah 14:1-17:18*
 - *Message #6. - The Sabbath Has Been Desecrated Jeremiah 17:19-27*
 - *Message #7. - Distressing Parables and Word Pictures Depicting Jerusalem's Captivity - Jeremiah 18:1-20:18*
 - *Message #8. - A Message to Israel's Leaders - Jeremiah 21:1-14*
 - *Message #9. - The Contrast Between Judah's Wicked Leaders and The Righteous Leader Who Will Come - Jeremiah 22:1-23:40*
 - *Message #10. - Good and Bad Figs - Jeremiah 24:1-10*
 - *Message #11. - Seventy Years of Captivity - Jeremiah 25:1- 38*
 - *Message #12. - Jeremiah Escapes the Plot Against Him - Jeremiah 26:1-24*
 - *Message #13. - Jeremiah's Yoke and Confrontation with Hananiah – Jeremiah 27:1-28:17*
 - *Message #14. - A Message to the Exiles in Babylon - Jeremiah 29:1-32*
 - ***A New Covenant is Coming (30:1-33:26)***
 - *Restoration is promised (30:1-31:40)*

- *Jeremiah expresses hope by purchasing a piece of land (32:1-44)*
 - *A second assurance of restoration (33:1-26)*
- **Judgment Cannot Be Averted (34:1-45:5)**
 - *A message to Zedekiah; a rebuke to slave owners ; a message of hope to the Humble; the persecution and imprisonment of Jeremiah (34:1-38:28)*
 - *The Fall of Jerusalem (39:1-18)*
 - *Intrigue and despair following the invasion (40:1-45:5)*
- **The Word of The Lord to Other Nations (46:1-51:64)**
 - *Against Egypt - (46:1-28)*
 - *Against Philistia - (47:1-7)*
 - *Against Moab - (48:1-47)*
 - *Against Ammon - (49:1-6)*
 - *Against Edom - (49:7-22)*
 - *Against Damascus - (49:23-27)*
 - *Against Arabia - (49:28-33)*
 - *Against Elam - (49:34-39)*
 - *Against Babylon - (50:1-51:64)*
- **Summary of The Fall of Jerusalem (52:1-34)**
 - *The Destruction of the city (52:1-23)*
 - *The Deportation of the Jews (52:24-30)*
 - *Help for Jehoiachin (52:31-34)*
- **The Lamentations of Jeremiah**
 - *Lamentations over the Destruction of Jerusalem (Lamentations 1:1-22)*
 - *The Anger of The Lord is Explained, Justified, and Accepted (2:1-22)*

- *The Distress, Hope and Intercession of Jeremiah (3:1-66)*
- *God's Wrath on Jerusalem and Edom (4:1-22)*
- *Prayers of The Remnant to Be Remembered and Restored (5:19-22)*

Worth noting:

- The Hebrew culture and psychology understood the need to express grief, loss and confusion. Other “Lamentations” are found in Job 3:3-26; Job 7:1-27; Job 10:1-22; Jeremiah 15:15-18; Jeremiah 17:14-23; Ezekiel 19:1-14; Ezekiel 27:1-36; Ezekiel 32:1-21 as well as in many of the Psalms (such as Psalm 3).
- Additional Lamentations reflecting the situations such as the situation in Jerusalem are found in Jeremiah 30:1-31:40; Ezekiel 37:1-28; Hosea 3:5 and 14:1-9; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 7:14-20; Zechariah 14:1-11 and Malachi 4:1-6.
- Though much of Jeremiah’s message is centered on Judgment, there is a strong Messianic reminder in chapter 23. The “Righteous Branch” is coming!

When reading the Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations:

- Remember that Jeremiah is collection of many prophetic oracles as well as a collection of stories about Jeremiah’s ministry.
- Jeremiah is best understood if we take time to familiarize ourselves with the historical and political intrigue of the era. We are afforded a rare in-depth look at the political debate focusing on national pride; forgotten foundations, and pro-Egyptian voices.
- Remember to balance your focus on the impending doom and the promised restoration. Jeremiah was the “Weeping Prophet”, and we are tempted to minimize the strong message of hope.
- For more information about The Return of the Exiles, read Ezra and Nehemiah.