

10. Jeremiah

I. Background and Context

- A. There are many reasons why the authorship of this book have come under question: “the variety of types of literature found in the book, the differences between the Hebrew and Greek versions of the book, and the difficult lives Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch lived. However, these complications described below do not make it impossible for the contents of the book to be Jeremiah’s words, as the Bible says they are (1.1).”¹
- B. Jeremiah was born and raised in Anathoth, called to be a prophet c. 627 B.C. when he was just a youth (1.6) and served for over 40 years (1.2-3). He became a priest and was possibly a descendant of Abiathar, high priest during David’s reign (1.1).
- C. By worldly standards, Jeremiah was very unsuccessful as a minister of the Word. He endured much persecution (20.1-6, 37.11-38.13, 43.1-7), including that at the hands of his hometown (11.18-23), and was never married (16.1-4). In fact, Scripture records only two who converted at Jeremiah’s preaching: Baruch (32.12, 36.1-4, 45.1-5) and Ebed-melech (38.7-13, 39.15-18).
- D. Jeremiah is known as the “weeping prophet” for his many laments of Israel’s condition (8.18-9.3, 13.15-17), as well as for his authorship of the book of Lamentations.
- E. The purpose of this book was to “leave behind a record of the tumultuous times in which [Jeremiah and Baruch] lived.”² For this reason, there are far more narrative (as opposed to poetic) sections in Jeremiah than in other prophets’ writings. His writings span the reigns of
 1. Josiah (chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6),
 2. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim (chs. 7, 25, 26, 35, 36, 45, 46, 47, 48),
 3. Jehoiachin, Zedekiah (chs. 20, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 49, 50, 51, 52),
 4. and the Babylonian Empire (chs. 40, 41, 43, 44).

II. Key Themes

- A. God and humanity
- B. Old covenant, Messiah, and new covenant

III. Outline

- A. Introduction (1.1-19)
 1. Jeremiah’s historical setting (1.1-3)
 2. Jeremiah’s call and message (1.4-16)
 3. God’s promised protection of Jeremiah (1.17-19)
- B. Israel’s Covenantal Adultery (2.1-6.30)
 1. Israel has been a faithless spouse (2.1-3.5)
 2. Israel can and should repent (3.6-4.4)
 3. Disaster is coming (4.5-31)
 4. Judah’s unwillingness to repent and its consequences (5.1-31)
 5. God has rejected his people (6.1-30)
- C. False Religion and an Idolatrous People (7.1-10.25)
 1. Judah’s improper reliance on the temple (7.1-8.3)
 2. Judah rejects God’s Torah (8.4-17)
 3. Judah lives deceitfully (8.18-9.9)

¹ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1363.

² *ESV Study Bible*.

4. Judah grieves Jeremiah (9.10-26)
 5. Judah engages in idolatry (10.1-16)
 6. Judah will go into exile (10.17-25)
- D. Jeremiah's Struggles with God and Judah (11.1-20.18)
1. Jeremiah surprised by opposition (11.1-12.17)
 2. Jeremiah feels betrayed by God (13.1-15.21)
 3. Jeremiah renewed by God (16.1-17.18)
 4. Jeremiah burdened by constant opposition (17.19-18.23)
 5. Jeremiah endures suffering and questions his calling (19.1-20.18)
- E. Jeremiah's Confrontations (21.1-29.32)
1. Jeremiah opposes Judah's kings (21.1-23.8)
 2. Jeremiah confronts false prophets (23.9-40)
 3. Jeremiah opposes Judah's people (24.1-25.38)
 4. Jeremiah opposes false belief (26.1-29.32)
- F. Restoration for Judah and Israel (30.1-33.26)
1. God will restore the nation (30.1-24)
 2. God will make a new covenant with Israel (31.1-40)
 3. God will bring Israel back to the Promised Land (32.1-44)
 4. God will honor the Davidic covenant (33.1-26)
- G. God Judges Judah (34.1-45.5)
1. God's faithfulness and Judah's infidelity (34.1-35.19)
 2. Judah rejects God's word (36.1-32)
 3. Jerusalem's last days (37.1-39.18)
 4. Judah's futile rebellion against Babylon (40.1-41.18)
 5. Judah's futile rebellion against God (42.1-45.5)
- H. God's Judgment on the Nations (46.1-51.64)
1. God will judge Egypt (46.1-28)
 2. God will judge Philistia (47.1-7)
 3. God will judge Moab (48.1-47)
 4. God will judge many nations (49.1-39)
 5. God will judge Babylon (50.1-51.64)
- I. Conclusion: The Fall of Jerusalem (52.1-34)
1. Jerusalem's fall and Zedekiah's blinding (52.1-11)
 2. The destruction of the temple (52.12-23)
 3. The exiling of the people (52.24-30)
 4. The continuation of the Davidic lineage (52.31-34)

IV. Key Passages

A. Four Analogies

1. The Ruined Loincloth (13.1-11)
2. The Jars Filled with Wine (13.12-14)
3. The Potter and the Clay (18.1-11)
4. The Broken Flask (19.1-15)

	The Ruined Loincloth (13.1-11)	The Jars Filled with Wine (13.12-14)	The Potter and the Clay (18.1-11)	The Broken Flask (19.1-15)
God's intention	As a loincloth clings to the body, Israel was meant to cling to God (13.11).	Wine can be used for celebration, as the revelers noted, "Do we not indeed know that every jar will be filled with wine?" (13.12)	Israel was meant to be as clay in God's hand, to be molded and shaped by his will (18.6).	Israel was meant to be an earthenware flask set aside for noble purpose, even for holding treasure (cf. 2 Cor. 4.7).
Israel's rebellion	Instead, they pursued other gods and became ruined, good for nothing (13.10).	Instead, the Israelites turned to excess leading to drunkenness, deserving to be dashed and destroyed (13.14).	Instead, the clay was spoiled and needed to be reworked into another vessel (18.4), as God would do to Israel through Babylon (18.11).	Instead, Israel has "filled this place with the blood of innocents" (19.4-5), God will "break this people and this city" (19.10-11).

B. Jeremiah and the False Prophets (25-29)

1. Consider the prophecy of Hananiah in Jer. 28.10-11. It uses symbolism, borrows the language of true prophets, and delivers a message of hope and comfort unto God's people, *yet it is not the Word of God.*
 - a) It is contrary to the word the Lord called Jeremiah to prophesy unto the people of Israel (25.1-14) and contradicts the Lord's use of symbolism (27.1-7).
 - b) It is ineffectual to stay the coming disaster for the people of Israel (28.12-14), and God reminds his people not to listen to these false prophets (29.8-9).
 - c) Hananiah is judged for presuming the office of prophet (28.15-17).
 - d) Yet, God does not withhold his promise of restoration for it (29.10-14). Note that it is in the context of preparing his people for 70 years of exile that God reminds the Israelites that he "has a plan for you" (29.11).
 - (1) God's plans for his people are certain (29.11).
 - (2) God's plans for his people are designed to sanctify them (29.12-13).
 - (3) God's plans for his people are accompanied by promise of blessing (29.14).

Though trouble last long, it shall not last always. The time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, will come. When things are at the worst they will begin to mend; and he will give them to see the glorious perfection of their deliverance; for, as for God, his work is perfect. He that in the beginning finished the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of both, will finish all the blessings of both to his people. When he begins in ways of mercy he will make an end. God does nothing by halves.³

2. Consider the prophecy of Shemaiah in Jer. 29.24-28.
 - a) Like Hananiah, Shemaiah rejects the prophecies of Jeremiah, the "madman" or "babbler" who should be "rebuked" (29.26-27). He prefers Hananiah's prophecy of relative comfort, that of a short exile, to that of Jeremiah who speaks of an exile that "will be long" (29.28).
 - b) Like Hananiah, Shemaiah is rejected by God as one not sent by God (29.31) and one who will be punished for his insolence (29.32).

³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2014, www.biblestudytools.com.

- c) It is important to note that Hananiah’s prophecy is not unfaithful to God’s word because he breaks the yoke from Jeremiah’s neck; God himself promises to break the yoke in Jer. 30.8-11. The problem of Hananiah’s prophecy is that it promises that God will break the yoke *without a period of judgment and exile* (or, at the very least, shortened period of judgment and exile).

C. The Righteous Branch (23.1-8)

False shepherds	The Righteous Branch
Destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture (23.1)	He shall reign, deal wisely, and execute justice and righteousness (23.5)
Have not attended to the sheep (23.2)	Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely (23.6)
Have not overseen the sheep so that they would be fruitful (23.3)	Will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness” (23.6)
Have not cared for sheep, causing them to fear, be dismayed, and be missing (23.4)	Shall be gathered from the north country to dwell in the land (23.7-8)

1. The promise of the Righteous Branch is reiterated in Jer. 33.14-18 regarding the LORD’s eternal covenant with David.

D. The promise of healing

1. Israel’s wounds are described as “incurable” and “grievous,” having “no medicine” and “no healing” (30.12-13), and yet God promises, “I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal” (30.17).
2. Palaces and cities will be restored (30.18-19), and vineyards will be replanted (31.5).
3. The scattered people will be gathered together (31.9-10), and their mourning will be turned to joy (31.13-14).
4. All of this will happen because of God’s covenant love (31.3, 20).
5. These promises are repeated in Jer. 33.6-11.

E. The New Covenant (31.31-37, 32.36-41)

1. The old covenant failed not because of God, who remained a faithful husband (Jer. 31.32), but because Israel broke the covenant with their sin.
2. Whereas the law of the old covenant was written on tablets and scrolls (cf. Ex. 34.1, Deut. 31.9-13), the New Covenant will be “within them” and written “on their hearts” (Jer. 31.33).
3. This relationship is not merited by their good works, but their good works are actually a product of this new covenant (31.34).
4. The New Covenant will be permanent, only to be cast off if the fixed order of creation could be cast off (31.35-37).
5. This covenant is later called the “eternal covenant” in Jer. 32.36-41, in which God reiterates the same blessings:
 - a) The promise of being gathered (32.37)
 - b) The promise of a covenant relationship (32.38)
 - c) The promise of sanctification (32.39)
 - d) The promise to write his law on their hearts (32.40)