



Jeremiah: God of Judgment

Memory Verse: Jeremiah 1:4-5 "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.' "

Background

Jeremiah is the 24th book of the Bible and the 2nd book of the Major Prophets. Jeremiah's ministry began in 627 B.C. under a young and godly king Josiah, and ended around 582 B.C. with his prophecy to the Jews who fled to Egypt. Jeremiah dictated prophecies from the Lord to his secretary, Baruch. Because of Jeremiah's lineage, he would have been raised a priest, and at twenty years of age he began to prophesy and continued in that office for the rest of his adult life, some 40 years or more. Jeremiah ministered during the reign of 5 kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah—Judah's last king.

Five years after being called by God while purifying the Lord's temple, King Josiah's servants found the sacred book of the Law that had been given to Moses. Revival spread through the land as Judah renewed the covenant with God, until Babylon overthrew Assyria and Josiah met an untimely death at the age of 39. The Egyptian Pharaoh Neco installed one of Josiah's sons, Jehoiakim to the throne and soon the nation reverted to idolatry and corruption and that began the downfall of Judah that Isaiah had prophesied about.

The Short Story

Jeremiah warns the people to turn from idolatry and corruption, but they refuse, and God's judgment leads them into captivity in Babylon.

What's the Big Idea?

Jeremiah was commissioned with the task of proclaiming a violent word from the Lord— a word of scalding judgment soon to come from Babylon. There would be hope mixed with the prophecies; but overall, his was not an enviable task. The Lord promised though that He would be with Jeremiah and give him strength to pronounce His judgments in the face of opposition. Because Jeremiah prophesied in the final years of Judah before God's people were exiled to Babylon, it makes sense that the book's overarching theme is judgment. Indeed, the first forty-five chapters focus primarily on the judgment coming to Judah because of its disbelief and disobedience. However, an element of grace is also present in these events. The fall of Jerusalem comes nearly nine hundred years after the original covenant between God and the Israelites in the Sinai desert (Exodus 24:1–18). Such an extended period of time witnesses to God's great patience and mercy, allowing His people the opportunity to turn from their sinful ways—a lifestyle they began not long after they struck the original covenant with God (32:1–35).

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

The prophecies of Jeremiah offer us a unique insight into the mind and heart of one of God's faithful servants. The book includes numerous personal statements of emotional engagement, painting Jeremiah not merely as a prophet brought on the scene to deliver God's message but also as a red-blooded human being who felt compassion for his people, desired judgment for evildoers, and was concerned about his own safety as well.

Significantly, the book of Jeremiah also provides us the clearest glimpse of the new covenant God intended to make with His people once Christ came to earth. This new covenant would be the means of restoration for God's people, as He would put His law within them, writing it on hearts of flesh rather than on tablets of stone. Rather than fostering our relationship with God through a fixed location like a temple, He promised through Jeremiah that His people would know Him directly, a knowledge that comes through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 31:31–34; see also Hebrews 8:6).

Teaching Text

Jeremiah 2:11-13 “Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols. ¹² Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror,” declares the LORD. ¹³ “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- Why was Jeremiah known as the weeping prophet? How hard is it to deliver words of correction? Why?
- What were the two offenses and why were they so hurtful to God? How does the way we act appear to God?
- Why did Israel reject God’s guidance and leadership? What makes us so independent?
- What does “broken cisterns that cannot hold water” imply today? Where are you experiencing seepage?
- Read Ps 63:1 “You God, art my God; I thirst for you” Why does God take pleasure in a positive response?

Practical Application

- Jeremiah’s metaphor leads us to ask: “What are you thirsty for? “ What do you really want in life?
- Where have you rejected God’s instruction and provision? Why? What have you done to correct it?
- Why is it so easy to be self sufficient rather than God dependent? How do you handle being self absorbed?
- What belief systems have you held that has proven to be faulty? What caused you to change your mind?
- Where do you need to apply this passage to your life? Where do you need a fresh drink of the Holy Spirit?

Hitting the Highpoints

- 7:23-24, ...“Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people.”
- 8:12, “... they have no shame at all...So they will fall among the fallen they will be brought down”
- 9:23-24, Let not the wise boast of their wisdom...let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me...”
- 21:4, “I am about to turn against you the weapons of war that are in your hands...”
- 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”
- 33:3, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Bonus Features

Where is Jesus? Jeremiah also provides us the clearest glimpse of the new covenant God intended to make with His people once Christ came to earth. This new covenant would be the means of restoration for God’s people, as He would put His law within them, writing it on hearts of flesh rather than on tablets of stone. Rather than fostering our relationship with God through a fixed location like a temple, He promised through Jeremiah that His people would know Him directly, a knowledge that comes through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Along with this foreshadowing of redemption we also see Jesus Christ’s return is foretold in Jeremiah Chapter 23: The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior. In chapter 50 Jesus is called the Lord of Hosts and our Redeemer, one who pleads our case before the Father. Even in the midst of weeping and judgment, God’s grace and mercy are proclaimed. Praise God that he is faithful and all his promises are true!

Personal Takeaways and Notes