

NAME

The name "Jeremiah" means "whom Jehovah establishes." Jeremiah needed to realize that he has been established by Jehovah in order to persevere in his difficult ministry.

AUTHOR

Jeremiah stands out as a lonely figure, isolated by a message from God which made him increasingly unpopular. He is God's last messenger to Jerusalem which had become hopelessly devoted to idols. Jeremiah ceaselessly cries out, "*Repent!*" But to no avail.

His Background (Mitchell):

Jeremiah was the son of a priest. His father, Hilkiyah, might well have been the man who found the Law of the Lord which sparked the revival during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22:8). He lived in the village of Anathoth, located about 2 miles north of Jerusalem.

His Ministry (Mitchell):

Jeremiah was chosen to be a prophet even before his conception (1:5). He was commissioned while still young (1:6). Thus he had a long ministry that spanned the reigns of the last five kings of Judah. Hence he personally experienced the last three deportations and remained in the land after the bulk of the nation had been taken into captivity (see date below). When the remnant wanted to flee to Egypt, he prophesied against it (42:15-43:3), was forced to go with them to Egypt (43:6,7), and died there. Tradition says that he was stoned by the remnant.

Jeremiah probably faced more opposition than any other prophet. He was rejected by his people, hated, put in stocks, imprisoned and charged with being a traitor.

The Call of Jeremiah (Nelson's):

The dramatic character of Jeremiah's call highlights the principle that when God calls a person to a task, He also equips that person for the task. Like Jeremiah, we list our weaknesses and limitations, but God promises His enabling presence. Like Jeremiah, we anticipate fearful situations, but God promises His deliverance. God does not call us to a task He cannot help us to fulfill.

His Message (Mitchell):

Jeremiah was called upon to deliver a strong, stern warning concerning the doom of captivity by Babylon unless the nation repented. Yet, upon occasion, he was allowed to see beyond the immediate doom to a brighter day when Messiah would ultimately and finally deliver His people.

See Halley page 362:

From the beginning of his ministry, 20 years before the issue was settled, Jeremiah insisted that Babylon would be the victor. All through his incessant and bitter complaints over Judah's wickedness, the following ideas recur again and again:

1. Judah is going to be destroyed by victorious Babylon
2. If Judah will turn from her wickedness, somehow God will save her from destruction at the hands of Babylon
3. Later, when there no longer seemed to be any hope of Judah's repentance, came a

message of renewed hope: if Judah, as a matter of political expediency, will submit to Babylon, she shall be spared.

The message of Jeremiah was not only unwelcome, but it was rejected by the nation.

The Scope of Jeremiah (Nelson's):

The "weeping prophet," Jeremiah, served during the final years of the southern Kingdom of Judah. While most of the Book of Jeremiah concerns Judah, chapters 46-51 contain prophecies against nine nations - from Egypt in the south, to Damascus in the north and Babylon to the east. After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was sent by God to Egypt, where presumably he died.

His Confessions (Mitchell):

There is considerable information concerning Jeremiah's personal experiences and feelings. In fact, far more personal information has been given at times than about any other prophets in their writings. This material has been at times referred to as "Jeremiah's Confessions" (10:2,3,24; 11:18-23:6; 15:10-21; 17:9-11,14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18). Hence, deep insights may be gained into Jeremiah's personality. They reveal a man under divine imperative who felt uncomfortable in the role he had to play. He seems to be retiring, sensitive, and timid. He yearns for sympathy and love yet never found it. He seems to have been unfit humanly speaking for the job he had been given.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee said: *"God chose a man who had a women's heart, trembling voice and tear filled eyes to deliver a harsh message of judgment. His own message broke his heart."* Yet in spite of all this, this sensitive, unself-confident man never once compromised his message from God.

Was Jeremiah a Traitor? (Mitchell)

Because he advocated submission to Babylon (17:12,13,17; 38:17-23) he was accused of being a traitor. Why would a loyal Jew like Jeremiah do this? The answer is that he realized that God had conferred universal power on Nebuchadnezzar and he was, therefore, "God's servant" (25:9; 27:6). Hence, to resist Nebuchadnezzar was to resist God. The nation was finished, so the sensible thing was to surrender.

Because of Jeremiah's advice, Nebuchadnezzar spared his life and offered him any honor he would accept - even a place of honor in the court at Babylon (39:12). But, Jeremiah decried the acts of Nebuchadnezzar as being a crime against God's people and that because of this Babylon itself would be destroyed and abandoned forever (chapters 50,51). No! Jeremiah was not a traitor!

DATE

Jeremiah: 626-585 He was a contemporary of Habakkuk, Zephaniah (who helped Jeremiah in Jerusalem), Nahum, Obadiah (605-585?), Ezekiel (593-571) (who ministered among the exiles in Babylon), and Daniel 605-530) (who ministered at the Babylonian court) - see Halley page 362

Contemporary kings of Judah: Jeremiah ministered under the kings Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. See Halley page 363. See handout: Rulers of the Divided Kingdom of Judah and Israel (previous); Timeline of the Prophets.

Jeremiah lived about 125 years after Isaiah. Isaiah had seen Jerusalem saved from the Assyrians.

Jeremiah tried to save the city from the Babylonians but failed. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet in 626 B.C. In 40 terrible years he saw: 1) Jerusalem partly destroyed in 605 B.C.; 2) Jerusalem laid waste in 597 B.C.; and 3) Jerusalem burned and desolated in 586 B.C. Thus Jeremiah lived through the last 40 agonizing years and witnessed the death of his beloved nation.

THEME

Type of Literature: Prophecy / Major Prophet

Halley (page 43): "A Last Effort to Save Jerusalem"

Mitchell: Twofold...

1. Judgment is certain and near unless the nation repents
2. Restoration will certainly follow judgment. Jeremiah views restoration as both near (after 70 years) and distant (under Messiah).

Key Word (Nelson's): Judah's Last Hour - In Jeremiah, God is seen as patient and holy: He delays judgment and appeals to His people to repent before it is too late. Judah's time for repentance will soon pass.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"But this command I gave them: 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.' But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward" (Jeremiah 7:23,24).

"I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a liar of jackets, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.' Who is the man so wise that he can understand this? To whom has the mouth of the Lord spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through" (Jeremiah 8:11,12)?

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 31 - Amid all the judgment and condemnation by Jeremiah are the wonderful promises of Jeremiah 31. Even though Judah has broken the covenants of her great King, God will make a new covenant and write it on their hearts.

Outline:

This book is very difficult to outline. Many of the messages are dated, but these dated messages show that the book was not arranged in chronological order. The lack of chronological order was evidently intentional. Yet, what the prophet's rationale was in the arrangement of these messages is really difficult to discern.

- I. The Prophet's Call 1
- II. Messages Before the Capture of Jerusalem 2-39
- III. Messages After the Capture of Jerusalem 40-51
- IV. Historical Appendix 52

RECIPIENTS

God's people - specifically those of the southern Kingdom of Judah... and us.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

By all modern standards Jeremiah's ministry was a failure. And yet, by God's standards Jeremiah's ministry was a success. He did what God told him to do - preaching without compromise whether or not his hearers listened to him - and even when they rejected him personally.

There is a practical lesson here about obeying God and what true success is all about. God wants faithfulness from His people (1 Corinthians 4:2) even though we may not see the results.

The Historical Appendix of chapter 52 as a summary of the fall of Jerusalem is almost identical with the material found in 2 Kings 24:18-25:30. Possibly this appendix was added to show how the prophet's message of doom was fulfilled. Zedekiah's reign and rebellion are described in 52:1-11. The siege and fall of the city is depicted with the plundering of the Temple and murder of the priests (12-27). The three deportations are enumerated. The suppression of Zedekiah's revolt as well as the punishment for Gedaliah's assassination are presented (28-30). After three months reign, Jehoiachin was carried to Babylon and never returned (31-34). Compare with 2 Kings 25:27-30. All of this moves the historical and spiritual record of God's people forward.

RESOURCES

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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