

GREAT THEMES OF JEREMIAH

A Thirteen Lesson Bible Study by Jeff S. Smith

JEREMIAH 51

cause, that he may
disquiet the inhabit

35 ¶A sword is t
the LORD, and upon
and upon her prince

36 A sword is upon
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shall be dismayed.

37 A sword is upon
their chariots, and upon
that are in the midst o
come as women: a swo

38 A sword shall
shall

Introduction

Jeremiah impresses modern readers on so many levels. His biography is compelling, but his prophetic record is even greater. Jeremiah is credited not only with the prophecy that bears his name and tells story, but also with the short book that succeeds it in the canon—Lamentations. As a man, Jeremiah is noted for his courage, humility and sensitivity, making him the weeping prophet, but not a weak one. The prophet’s task was to convince his countrymen that the Babylonian threat was not only real, but certain, even as false prophets assured the same audience that all was well. Jeremiah lived about six hundred years before Christ and labored during a time of international turbulence and Hebrew decline.

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Lesson 1: The Call of Jeremiah

Text: Jeremiah 1:1-19

1. When did Jeremiah live? Where did he live (cf. Joshua 21:13-18, First Kings 2:26-27)?

2. What do we know about the reign of Josiah (Second Chronicles 34-35, Second Kings 22-23)?

3. What is the significance of the name Hilkiah (Jeremiah 1:1, Second Kings 22:8)?

4. Describe the prophecy of this era which eventually consumes the life of Jeremiah as well (Second Kings 22:14-17).

5. Two other kings are mentioned here in Jeremiah 1:3. Describe them:

- Jehoiakim (Second Kings 23:35-24:7, Second Chronicles 36:5-8)

- Zedekiah (Second Kings 24:17-20, Second Chronicles 36:11-21)

6. With what stunning fact does God introduce himself to Jeremiah? Compare to David's song in Psalm 139:13-16.

7. Does this stunning fact apply to all men? Explain.

8. What was Jeremiah's objection to God's call? Explain.

9. How old would a preacher today need to be to gain your respect and attention (cf. First Timothy 4:12)?

10. With what did God encourage Jeremiah even as he rejected his objection (1:8, 17-19; cf. Second Timothy 1:6-12)?

11. How did God compare his office to that of planter or builder?

12. What did the almond tree illustrate?

13. What did the boiling pot illustrate?

Lesson 2: Perils Without and Within

Text: Jeremiah 2:1-10:25

1. How did Jehovah remember Judah (2:1-3)? What had changed (2:4-13)?
2. Explain the frustration of God with an idolatrous nation (2:26-30)?
3. What is signified when Judah goes forth with hands on their heads (2:35-37)?
4. What is true today when one claims innocence and not to have sinned, when in fact he has (First John 1:5-10)?
5. To what does God compare his relationship with Judah? What unprecedented offer does he make to her (3:1-15)? Compare to James 4:1-4.
6. What is God's threat to Judah if she does not repent (4:5-9, 27-31; 5:14-17)?

7. What is Jeremiah's response to God's message (4:10; cf. First Kings 22:22)?

8. Explain God's eagerness to forgive (5:1-2; cf. Genesis 18:16-33).

9. Why didn't Judah take this threat seriously (5:7-13, 30-31)?

10. To what present danger do John, Peter and Paul compare false prophets of old (First John 4:1-5, Second Peter 2:1-22 and First Timothy 1:18-20)?

11. Where did God station Jeremiah next (7:1-11)? What was his message?

12. Of what were the Jews of the first century overconfident (John 8:33)? How might this warning be applied to Christians today?

13. Why was Jeremiah forbidden to pray for them (7:16-19; cf. 11:14)?

14. What message healed the people slightly (8:8-12)?

15. How did Jeremiah feel now (9:1-2; 10:23-25)?

Lesson 3: Personal Spiritual Experiences

Text: Jeremiah 11:1-20:18

1. We get an intense notion of why God is so upset with his people here (11:1-13). What is the iron furnace? What were the conditions and reward of his covenant with them?

2. What did the men of Anathoth have in mind for Jeremiah (11:18-23)? What connection did they have with him? What did Jesus and John say about this potential for Christians as well (John 15:18-22, First John 3:13)?

3. Jeremiah asks the classic question—“Why does the way of the wicked prosper” (12:1-13)? What is the answer?

4. Explain what is meant concerning the wicked for whom God is “near in their mouth, But far from their mind (see Isaiah 29:13-14, Ezekiel 33:31, Matthew 15:7-9)?

5. Although the destruction of Judah is certain, what else does God have in mind to mitigate the consequences (12:14-17; 16:14-15)?

6. In chapter 13, God moves from metaphors to object lessons. What is the first one (13:1-11)?

7. Why was God not optimistic about the Ethiopian changing his skin or the leopard his spots (13:20-23, 17:1)? Compare them to the heathen of Ephesians 4:17-20 and the apostates of First Timothy 4:1-5.

8. Besides the Babylonian sword, God was also preparing drought and famine for Judah (14:1-16). The people seem to repent now, so why does God not relent (cf. 15:6)? List the four fates they face (15:1-4).

9. Describe Jeremiah's self-estimation (15:10, 15-16:9)? How did God answer his complaints?

10. What is the problem with trusting in man (17:5-10)? What makes the difference (Psalm 1:1-6)?

11. Why didn't the fact that everyone violate the Sabbath make it acceptable to God under an evolving standard of conduct (17:19-27)?

12. Explain the teaching behind the potter and the clay (18:1-11, 19:10-15).

13. What does Pashhur do to Jeremiah (20:1-18)? Why?

Lesson 4: Bad Figs

Text: Jeremiah 21:1-25:38

1. This section of Jeremiah's prophecy deals with Judah's incompetent leadership, beginning with her bad kings in a topical rather than chronological survey. Who were Zedekiah and Nebuchadnezzar (21:1-10)?
2. How would you characterize Judah's outlook, according to Jeremiah's prophecy? What is the difference between the ways of life and of death?
3. "Behold, I am against you" is an important theme to Ezekiel and Nahum as well. The people of Jerusalem often imagined security in their hillside location, but God makes an ironic and ominous reference to the city here. What is it (21:11-14)?
4. Jeremiah is plain-spoken when it comes to explaining Judah's demise. Why was the Lord punishing this great city (22:1-9)?
5. Jeremiah remembers the slain King Josiah as Judah's last best hope (22:10), but his successors failed to imitate him. What became of his son, Jehoahaz, or Shallum, who reigned for three months in 609 B.C. (22:11-12; cf. First Chronicles 3:15, Second Kings 23:31-34)?

6. What is the focus of God's indictment of the king (22:13-23)?

7. Coniah, king for three months in 589-97 B.C. is also known as Jehoiachin and Jeconiah (22:24-30). What did Nebuchadnezzar do to him and Judah during his brief reign (Second Kings 24:8-12)?

8. Which group of leaders is indicted next (23:1-5; cf. Ezekiel 34:1-10)?

9. What is Jeremiah's far-reaching promise regarding a remnant and a shepherd (23: 6-8; John 10:11, First Peter 5:4)?

10. What fault did God find with the prophets and priests (23:9-22)?

11. Why do false prophets and modern false teachers do what they do (23:23-32; cf. Second Peter 3:5, Second Peter 2:1-3)?

12. What are the oracles of God and what does this have to do with us today (23:33-40; First Peter 4:11, Second Timothy 3:16-17)?

13. Distinguish between the good and bad figs (24:1-10).

14. How long had Jeremiah been working? How long would the exile last (25:1-38)?

Lesson 5: False Prophets

Text: Jeremiah 26:1-29:32

1. Soon after Jehoiakim took Judah's throne in 609 B.C., God sent Jeremiah to the temple court in order to speak another work of rebuke. What was God's simple hope (26:1-6)?

2. What is the significance of Shiloh (see also 7:12)?

3. How did the people respond to this warning (26:7-11)? What was the source of the prophet's claim to innocence (26:12-15)?

4. What changed their minds (26:16-19)?

5. What cautionary lesson does the fate of Urijah provide Jeremiah (26:20-23)? Who is Ahikam (see also Second Kings 22:12-14)?

6. What gift did Jeremiah send by the hand of the ambassadors of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon (27:1-11)? What was the meaning?

7. What had happened to many of the temple's treasures (27:12-22; Second Kings 24:8-16)? What would become of the rest (Ezra 1:7-11, 5:13-15)?
8. Why is the pride of God so seemingly unwounded by these crimes and this desecration of his house (Acts 17:24)?
9. In the summer of 593 B.C., Hananiah visited Jerusalem. What was his message (28:1-4)? What kind of prophet was Hananiah?
10. What is the prophet's test (28:5-9; see also Deuteronomy 18:20-22)?
11. Perhaps the reasons that false prophets and false teachers operate are the same. What seems to be the cause?
12. Describe Hananiah's dramatic illustration (28:10-17) What was his reward?
13. What is the danger in trusting in a lie (Second Thessalonians 2:9-12)?
14. What is the thrust of Jeremiah's new letter to the exiles in Babylon?

Lesson 6: Restoration

Text: Jeremiah 30:1-33:26

1. This section is called the Book of Consolation because it contains very positive and somewhat unexpected messages of hope about the future (30:1-3). What is the initial promise?
2. What is illustrated by the men with their hands over their loins (30:4-7)?
3. Who is at the heart of Israel's and Judah's future promise (30:8-11; cf. Daniel 9:25-26)? While there was no one to plead Judah's cause, what is the present role of the promised prince (30:12-17; First John 2:1-2, Hebrews 7:25)?
4. Why were outcast Judah's wounds incurable? Who were her predators and what did God predict for them?
5. These promises and predictions go beyond a simple national restoration of ancient Israel to the coming of the world's messiah (30:18-24). What fleshly Israel failed to obtain, spiritual Israel enjoys. What is spiritual Israel and where does her king reign (Gal. 6:16, Romans 2:28-29, Second Corinthians 6:16-18, First Peter 2:9-10, Acts 2:29-36)?
6. Jeremiah's prophecy continues to blend the physical (Israel's restoration) with the spiritual (the coming of the Christ). The divided kingdoms will be reunited after the exile to await a union with Gentile believers in Christ (31:1-15; cf. Ezekiel 37). So why was Rachel weeping (cf. Matthew 2:16-18)?

7. What was the result when Israel, the backsliding daughter “kicked herself” over her idolatry and moral sinfulness (31:16-22)?
8. What made Jeremiah’s sleep sweet (31:23-40, cf. Hebrews 8:8-12, 10:16-17)? What is this new covenant (Matthew 26:28, Colossians 2:13-14)?
9. What was wrong with their catchy little self-affirming proverb (31:29-30; cf. Ezekiel 18, Second Corinthians 5:10)?
10. Why was Jeremiah imprisoned (32:1-5)? What did he buy while there? (32:6-12) What did this act signify (32:13-23)? What soon shook Jeremiah’s confidence (32:24-44)?
11. Still imprisoned, Jeremiah is visited again by the Lord who reiterates his restoration promises. What is the good thing he planned (33:1-16)? What is the significance of the “Branch” imagery (33:17-18; cf. Romans 1:3-4)?
12. The Jews’ forlorn complaint here (33:17-26) foreshadows the way they felt when the Messiah came and invited Gentiles into the kingdom (Romans 10:21-11:2). What is the real reason for this apparent abandonment?

Lesson 7: Jerusalem's Last Days

Text: Jeremiah 34:1-39:18

1. During the reign of King Zedekiah, Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians from January 587 until about the middle of 586 B.C. (34:1). What tactic did the invaders employ and with what effect (Second Kings 25:1-3)?
2. Describe the predicted fate of Zedekiah (34:2-7). What was the only mercy granted to him?
3. Zedekiah issued an “emancipation proclamation,” perhaps out of concern for circumstances (34:8-16). What was the Law of Moses regarding servants and slaves (Exodus 21:2-4, Deuteronomy 15:12-15, Leviticus 25:39-55)?
4. What form of “liberty” did God proclaim against Judah when she recaptured her slaves after initially releasing them (34:17-22)?
5. Proclamation and sharing of liberty by those whose know its benefits is quite important to God. What did Jesus have in mind when he quoted Isaiah on this subject (Luke 4:17-21; cf. Romans 6:15-23, Second Corinthians 3:17, James 1:25, First Peter 2:16, 2 Peter 2:19)? What is not a part of this liberty?
6. Earlier, the Rechabites were nomads related to the Kenites and were friendly to Israel (35:1-11; cf. First Chronicles 2:55, Second Kings 10:5). They had inherited two rules from Jonadab (cf. Second Kings 10:15-17). What were they?
7. Why had God told Jeremiah to bring them in and offer them wine (35:12-19)? Compare to Isaiah 1:2-6 and Malachi 1:6.

8. Years before, when Jehoiakim reigned in about 605 B.C., Jeremiah enlisted the aid of Baruch (36:1-19). Who was Baruch (32:10-12)? What did Jeremiah ask of him? Why didn't Jeremiah do it himself? What effect did he have on the princes?

9. How did the king respond (36:20-26)? Did anyone protest? How did God respond to the king's actions (36:27-32)?

10. What event brought futile hope to Zedekiah and the Jews (37:1-10)?

11. Why was Jeremiah arrested (37:11-21)? Why did the king visit? How did Jeremiah attempt to reason with the king?

12. What were Jeremiah's next accommodations (38:1-13)? Why? Who rescued him and how?

13. What did Zedekiah fear (38:14-28)? What should he have feared?

14. Babylon penetrated Jerusalem in June or July of 586 B.C. (39:1-10). How did Nebuchadnezzar treat Jeremiah (39:11-18)?

Lesson 8: Remnant Tragedy

Text: Jeremiah 40:1-45:5

1. Who takes his chance now to scold Judah (40:1-6)? What does Jeremiah choose when offered the chance to enjoy provisions in Babylon?
2. Who governed Judah now (40:7-12)? Whom did he govern?
3. What was Johanan's concern (40:8-16)? Was it warranted (41:1-18, cf. Second Kings 25:25-26)?
4. What did the remnant request (42:1-6)?
5. Summarize the message God sent them 10 days later (42:7-18).
6. Why does Jeremiah accuse them of hypocrisy so quickly (42:19-22)?
7. Consider the following passages and identify ways in which hypocrisy might be exposed today (James 4:15, First John 5:3).

8. Why then did Jeremiah of all people end up in Egypt (43:1-7)?

9. What was the lesson of Jeremiah's hidden stones (43:8-13)?

10. What evidence did Jeremiah offer that the Jews in Egypt had not learned anything from the fall of Jerusalem (44:1-10)?

11. Jeremiah challenged them individually to return to Judah (44:11-14). How did the men respond (44:15-18)? How did the women respond (44:19)?

12. In what do we see God's tireless determination to save something for Judah (44:20-28)?

13. What sign will accompany God's punishment of those who opt for Egypt (44:29-30)?

14. Baruch was the brother of Seraiah, King Zedekiah's quartermaster (51:59-64) What had Baruch forfeited by working with Jeremiah (45:1-5; 36:1-19)? What did he gain?

Lesson 9: Judgment Against the Nations

Text: Jeremiah 46:1-48:47

1. Jeremiah also spent part of his life prophesying about Judah's pagan neighbors (46:1). Although the Lord utilized Egypt, Babylon and other countries to chasten his own people, their evils were willful and deserving of punishment. What crime did Pharaoh Necho of Egypt commit (46:2-12; Second Kings 23:29-30, Second Chronicles 35:20-27)?

2. What happened to Egypt as a result (Second Kings 23:31-24:7)?

Nebuchadnezzar advanced upon the land, defeating Necho's army in the battle of Carchemish in about 605 B.C.

3. What does Jeremiah identify as the reason for this defeat? How complete is it?

4. Who are the people of the north (46:13-24)?

5. With what did God reassure his people, here called Jacob or Israel (46:25-28)?

6. What is the benefit of divine chastening for today's people of God (Hebrews 12:1-11)?

7. The Philistines lived in a group of cities in the southwest corner of Canaan and Gaza was their main city (47:1-7). How does Jeremiah predict the Philistines' terror when the people of the north moved after them (3)?

8. What is the significance of the attack on Tyre and Sidon for the disciples of Christ (see Matthew 11:16-24)?

9. What is signified by the baldness and cutting in Gaza and Ashkelon?

10. Who were the Moabites (48:1-15; Genesis 19:36-37)?

11. In what did she place her confidence (7)?

12. Explain what the prophet means in verse 10: "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully, And cursed is he who keeps back his sword from blood." See also 1 Samuel 15:1-33.

13. What were Moab's crimes (48:16-39)?

- verse 26:
- verse 27:

14. Is there any hope left in Moab (48:40-47)?

7. Of what nation was Damascus the capital (49:23-27)? Who would punish Kedar and Hazor in the Arabian desert? What hope was there for Elam, a region in the southwest corner of present-day Iran (49:34-39)?

8. Why should God punish Babylon, if Nebuchadnezzar was only executing God's will in conquering Judah (50:1-2, 6-17)?

9. Who would punish Babylon (50:3)?

10. What does Jeremiah foresee regarding Israel's lot when this happens (50:4-5; Ezra 1:1-4)?

11. Did God intend to restore only Judah, or also Israel (50:18-32)? To what destruction does Jeremiah compare Babylon's (50:33-46)?

12. What other nations would ally with Persia to destroy Babylon (51:1-58)?

13. What was Seraiah to do with Jeremiah's book when he finished reading it in Babylon (51:59-64)? Why?

Lesson 11: Distress of Soul

Text: Lamentations 1:1-3:18

1. The book of Lamentations is a collection of prayers or songs which reflect one person's anguish at the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Traditionally, the book has been attributed to the pen of Jeremiah. The five poems each comprise a full chapter and the first four are written in the acrostic pattern. To what does the writer compare Jerusalem as he now sees it (1:1)?

2. Who were her lovers that have now forsaken her (1:2-5, 19; Jeremiah 2:23-28)?

3. What pleasant things had Jerusalem in days of old (1:6-10)?

4. Twice, Jerusalem's sad, dishonored state is illustrated with allusions to feminine attire. What are those references?

a. verse 8:

b. verse 9:

5. Why did the writer weep (1:11-22)? Was it because God was unjust (cf. Romans 3:5)?

Lesson 12: Rays of Hope

Text: Lamentations 3:19-5:22

1. Verses 1-18 comprised an awful cry of desperation, but this section begins with a statement of hope. What gave the writer this hope (3:19-30)?

2. Compare his sentiments to those of James 5:7-11, regarding the persecution of poor saints by the rich.

3. How would the Lord phrase Lamentations 3:30?

4. There are some things the Lord just will not do (3:31-36). List them:

- verse 31:
- verse 33:
- verse 34:
- verse 35:
- verse 36:

5. The writer is still preaching restoration to anyone who will listen (3:37-42). “Why should a living man, complain, A man for the punishment of his sins” (compare to Hebrews 12:5-6)?

6. The exiles sound a bit like some who live under the New Testament, specifically as the offscouring of the world (3:43-54). Who fits that description (First Corinthians 4:13)? Why?

7. When are all Christians treated like this (First Peter 4:1-4, Second Timothy 3:12, First Peter 1:3-6)?
8. What does the lamenter wish for his enemies (3:55-66)?
9. How is Judah's fall actually worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah (4:1-12)?
10. Why were the elders, priests and prophets held to greater accountability than the people (4:13-22; cf. James 3:1, Hebrews 13:17 and Matthew 15:1-13)?
11. Who do the people find responsible for this tragedy (5:1-18; cf. Jeremiah 31:29-30)? Compare to Exodus 20:3-6.
12. In a final burst of emotion and faith, the writer pleads for mercy (5:19-22). What does he request? What does he fear? Compare to James 4:7-10.

Lesson 13: Review

Text: Jeremiah 52:1-34

1. Who was the last great reformer king in Judah (Second Kings 22:1-23:30)? Why didn't God cancel his punishment of the nation (Second Kings 23:26, Jeremiah 15:6)?

2. Josiah was preceded by the evil Manasseh and Amon and succeeded by Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin. Who followed him (52:1-3)? Who was he (Second Kings 24:17)?

3. How did Habakkuk respond when he learned that God planned to use the Babylonians to punish Judah (Habakkuk 1:2-13)? How is his response similar to most of the Jews? Does Habakkuk change his outlook (2:1, 3:16-19)?

4. What did Zedekiah do when the Babylonians breached Jerusalem's walls and found a city in famine (52:4-11)? What became of him? What had Jeremiah prophesied (32:4, 34:3) that now fits nicely with Ezekiel's prediction (12:13)?

5. Describe the completeness of Jerusalem's fall (52:12-23).

6. How did Babylon continue to punish Judah (52:24-30)?

7. Nebuchadnezzar reigned in Babylon for 43 years. Who replaced him after Nebuchadnezzar was dead (52:31-34)? How did he try to appease his Jewish captives?

8. What empire conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. (Daniel 6:1-9)?

9. How had Jeremiah tried to resist his prophetic calling (1:6)? What did he endure along the way in his maturation?

10. What was Jeremiah's mission (1:10)?

11. What is the enduring lesson of his humble service to God (10:23)?

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