

JEREMIAH

A Picture of Struggling Faithfully with God

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- In 605 B.C., after Jeremiah had been prophesying for more than twenty years, God instructed him to record his prophecies in writing.
 - Jeremiah employed a scribe, Baruch, to do the actual writing as he dictated the words.
 - The scroll produced by Baruch was most likely very similar to what is preserved for us in chapters 1-25 of Jeremiah, usually designated Book 1 of Jeremiah.
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Writing the Book

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- Two other collections of Jeremiah's sayings can be found in the book in chapters 30-31 (Book 2) and chapters 46-51 (Book 3).
 - Interspersed among these are biographical sections that refer to Jeremiah in the third person and focus mainly on the latter part of his career.
 - These are commonly thought to have been added to the collection of Jeremiah's sayings by Baruch at a later time.
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Writing the Book

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- Jeremiah's call came at a critical juncture in Israel's history.
 - Josiah had ascended to the throne as a child of eight and when he reached twenty, he began to purge Jerusalem and Judea of pagan worship.
 - Jeremiah's call came shortly after this purge began, in 627 BC, the same year the last great ruler of the Assyrian Empire, Ashurbanipal, died.
 - So, this time was both a time of hope, in light of the spiritual renewal that was taking place, and also of danger, because a new enemy lurked on the horizon.
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Background

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- Hope was short-lived, because Josiah died in battle against the Egyptians, and his reforms died with him.
 - The slide toward exile was steep and fast, as over the next 25 years Josiah's sons presided over the collapse of Judah.
 - During this entire tragic period, Jeremiah ministered, he preached, he proclaimed the word of the Lord.
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Background

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- I. The Call of Jeremiah (1)**
 - II. Book 1 of the Oracles of Jeremiah (2-25)**
 - III. Biographical Interlude 1 (26-29)**
 - IV. Book 2: The Book of Consolation (30-31)**
 - V. Biographical Interlude 2 (32-45)**
 - VI. Book 3: Oracles Against the Nations (46-51)**
 - VII. Historical Appendix: The Fall of Jerusalem (52)**
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Outline of Jeremiah

- Jeremiah's purpose as a prophet was, of course, to **deliver the message the Lord gave him.**

- In doing so he desired to **bring the people back to the Lord** and to warn them of the **consequences should they continue their present course of action.**

- The purpose of the book is to **record the prophecies of Jeremiah** but also to **tell us something about the man Jeremiah and his lot as God's prophet, struggling both with the people and with the Lord.**

Purpose and Message

- While Jeremiah's struggles with the Lord concerning his mission reveal much about the prophet, **they reveal even more about the Lord** as we see **how he responded** to the man's complaints.

- Likewise, Jeremiah's problems with the people of Judah are presented to **demonstrate the response of Judah and her kings to his message.**

- Their rejection of the Lord and their actions against Jeremiah **served to increase their guilt before God.**

Purpose and Message

• The message of Jeremiah can be summarized by the content of the four categories of oracles:

- **indictment;**
- **judgment;**
- **instruction;** and,
- **aftermath.**

• **Indictment oracles** are all in Book 1, and the most prominent indictment is that the people had forsaken the Lord and had worshipped idols.

• **Judgment oracles** are more prevalent in the book than any of the other kinds of oracles and are national in scope and mostly political in nature.

Purpose and Message

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- There are fewer than a dozen **instruction oracles** in the book and the call was to return to the Lord and change their ways.
 - **Aftermath oracles** are found primarily in the Book of Consolation and the sections immediately preceding and succeeding it.
 - The message they gave is that the Lord would bring the people back from exile and that he would make a new covenant with them.
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Purpose and Message

God's Policy with Nations

- This policy is seen at work not only in the book of Jeremiah, but consistently through the Old Testament.
 - We might picture it through the **metaphor of a balance scale for the nation**, with weights representing good deeds loaded on side and weights representing wicked deeds piled on the other.
 - On the wicked side we might further picture a button located under the pan. When the nation's wicked conduct was sufficiently greater than the righteous aspect, their weight would depress the button, setting off a warning bell that signaled the mandate for God's judgment.
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Major Themes

- This metaphor is significant for Jeremiah and Ezekiel, for it contradicts a parable being circulated at the time to the effect that this generation was suffering for the sins of the previous generations.

- The metaphor demonstrates that only generations loading weights onto the side of the wicked deeds could create the mandate for judgment.

- Even the most superficial cessation of wickedness could induce God to delay his judgment, as was proved by the example of Nineveh and was stated explicitly by Jeremiah.

Major Themes

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- In conclusion, it must be noted that this system is **operative for nations, not individuals**, so it should not be confused with salvation by works.
 - Nations are not saved from sin, nor do they exist eternally.
 - Grace does exist in the system as evidenced by the long-suffering character of God, and **it continues to manifest his grace**, because there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that God has changed his policy for dealing with nations.
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Major Themes

The New Covenant

- The proclamation of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 is generally considered to be the foremost of the prophet's contributions to theology.
 - The treaty format of the covenant included a preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, a document clause, a list of witnesses, and a list of curses and blessings.
 - When we compare this format with Jeremiah's new covenant, we find that only the document clause is discussed.
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Major Themes

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- Rather than being etched in stone, **it was to be written on the heart.**
 - As a result, people would not have to be taught the law, but would **intrinsically know the law.**
 - The use of “new” here should not be thought of as indicating a totally separate covenant distinct from the previous ones, but an extension of them with new features and dimensions added.
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Major Themes

False Prophets

- A very frustrating problem for Jeremiah arose in the fact that not only was his message one of doom and gloom, but there were many other prophets – claiming also to be spokesman for Yahweh – who were prophesying peace, deliverance, and prosperity .
 - He contended that it could be considered an act of deception for the Lord to allow false prophecy to be spoken in his name and not to punish the perpetrator, for the people had not other means of determining who was a true spokesman. In response, the Lord rebuked Jeremiah, calling him to repentance and faithful service and promising protection from his enemies.
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Major Themes