

WEEK 5 | JEREMIAH & LAMENTATIONS

JEREMIAH

The prophet Jeremiah, like Isaiah, was a prophet to the nation of Judah. Unlike Isaiah, however, Jeremiah ministered to Judah before, during, and after her subjugation and exile to Babylon (ca. 626-562 BC; see 2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chron 36). He was there to see the ultimate covenant curse come to fruition: removal from the Promised Land (Lev 26:38-39; Deut 28:64-65), an experience he powerfully describes in the book of Lamentations. His oracles, then, are directed to a nation hardened against Yahweh, steeped in idolatry, and on the precipice of disaster.

Unsurprisingly, then, Jeremiah’s message is primarily one of condemnation and judgment against Judah for its rampant sin—specifically, idolatry and the worship of false gods (Jer 7:30-34; 16:10-13; 22:9; 32:29; 44:2-3). Jeremiah both warns Judah of Yahweh’s impending judgment and records the conquest of Judah and Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Jer 24:1; 52). His message, however, is not without hope. In the midst of judgment, there remains the promise of future salvation and restoration to the land (Jer 29:10).

The book of Jeremiah is a compilation of Jeremiah’s oracles (Jer 51:60, 64) as well as stories from his life, dictated to his scribe, Baruch (Jer 36:4, 18); it reads like an anthology of Jeremiah’s messages arranged with theological intention.

STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION	CONDEMNATION	COMFORT	CONDEMNATION	APPENDIX
Narrative	Oracles/Narrative	Oracles/ Narrative	Narrative/Oracles	Narrative
Words (Word of Yahweh) Prophet Time 1:1	Yahweh’s Judgment of Judah (and the Nations) 1:4	Yahweh’s Restoration of Israel/ Judah (Center) 30:1	Yahweh’s Judgment of Judah and the Nations 34:1	The Narrative of Jerusalem’s Desolation by Babylon 52:1

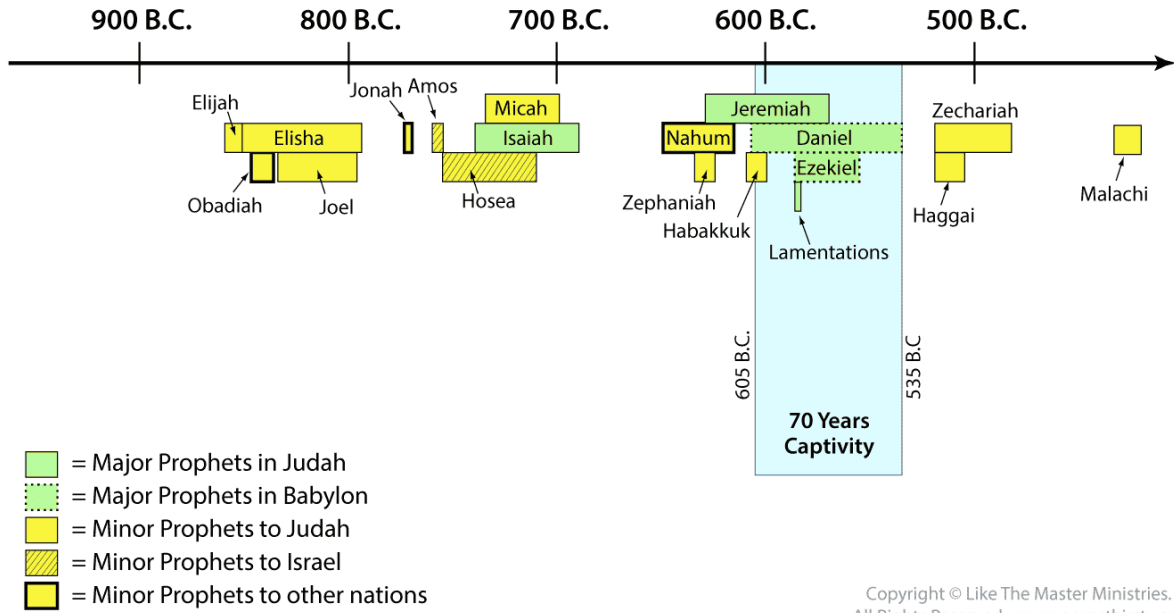
PURPOSE

Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians because Judah broke the Mosaic Covenant, especially in its spiritual adultery. Despite this, Yahweh's rule is assured through the promised Davidic King and the New Covenant (fulfilling the Abrahamic, Priestly, and Davidic Covenants).

THEMES

- 1) The Sovereignty of Yahweh (*1:10; 5:15; 6:19, 21; 9:7-11, 15-16; 10:18; 13:9, 13; 16:9, 18; 18:6-12, 17; 19:3, 15; 21:3-7; 23:3-6; 25:8-13; 29:17-19, 31-32; 30:3, 8- 11, 15, 17, 18-24; 31:1, 4, 8, *28; 32:37-44; 33:5-9; 39:16-18; 50:18-20; 51:1-2)
- 2) The Sin and Judgment of Judah (2-29, 34, 38, 39)/The Nations (25, 46-51)
- 3) The False Prophets (5:30-31; 14:13-16; 23:9-40; 27:1-29:32)
- 4) The Persecution of Jeremiah (1:18-19; 11:18-21; 15:19-21; 20:1-2; 26:7-24; 36:1-26; 37:13-16; 38:1-6; 43:1-4)
- 5) The Future Restoration of Judah/Israel (1:10; 3:11-4:2; 12:15; 16:14-15; 23:1-8; 24:4-7; 30:1-33:26; 46:27-28; 50:4-5, 19-20, 34)/The Nations (46:26b; 48:47; 49:6, 39)
- 6) The New Covenant (31:31-34)
 - a. An Uncircumcised Heart (4:4; 6:10; 9:25-26; cf. Deut 10:16; 30:6)
 - b. The Old Covenant (11:1-13)
 - c. "Turn," "Return," "Turn Back," "Repent" (48x in covenantal contexts)
- 7) The Experience of Jeremiah (cf. Matt 16:14)

Major and Minor Prophets



LAMENTATIONS

Written in 586 BC shortly after the fall of Jerusalem, the book of Lamentations is Jeremiah’s mournful response to the sack of the city at the hands of the Babylonians and the exile of the Jewish people. Though short, its theology is powerful. The book contains five chapters, the first four of which are an acrostic, where each verse begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the chapters conclude with the last letter of the alphabet. Chapter 3 breaks this mold; it contains sixty-six verses and uses each of the twenty-two letter of the Hebrew alphabet three times. This unique layout signals to the reader that chapter three is the theological center of the book and “the hermeneutical key for unlocking the theology of the entire book.”¹

Taking this structure into account, what becomes clear is that Judah and Jerusalem’s pain is warranted—the people have sinned against Yahweh and deserve his judgment. However, the God of the covenant will not persist in His anger forever. His mercy will prevail, and He will keep His promises to His people in the future.

STRUCTURE

The First Lament: The Devastation of Jerusalem	The Second Lament: The Lord’s Punishment of Jerusalem’s Sin	The Third Lament: The Grief of Jeremiah Expressed	The Fourth Lament: The Lord’s Wrath Detailed	The Final Poem: The Prayer of the Remnant
“How” (1:1)	“How” (2:1)	“I am the man” (3:1)	“How” (4:1)	“Remember” (5:1)
1:1 1:22	2:1 2:22	3:1 3:66	4:1 4:22	5:1 5:22

- A The Desolation of Jerusalem (1:1-22)
- B The Punishment of Jerusalem’s Sin by the Lord (2:1-22)
- C The Response of Jeremiah (3:1-66)
- B’ The Wrath of the Lord Detailed (4:1-22)
- A’ The Prayer of the Remnant for Restoration (5:1-22)

PURPOSE

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 366.

Jeremiah, Yahweh's prophet, mourned Jerusalem's destruction, acknowledging that his people have sinned and deserve God's anger. He also expressed hope of future restoration in light of Yahweh's mercy and steadfast love.

THEMES

- 1) The Pain of Yahweh's Servant (1:2, 16, 18, 20-21; 2:11; 3:1, 4, 12, 48; 5:15)
- 2) The Judgment from Yahweh (1:5, 14-15, 17; 2:1-8, 17; 3:37-38, 43-44; 4:11)
 - a. The Anger of Yahweh (1:12; 2:1-4, 21-22; 3:43; 4:11)
 - b. The Righteousness of Yahweh (1:18)
 - c. The Compassion of Yahweh (3:22, 32)
- 3) The Sin of Yahweh's People (1:5, 8-9, 18; 4:6, 13; 5:7)
- 4) The Arrogance of the Enemy (1:21-22; 2:15-17; 3:60-66; 4:21-22)
- 5) The Hope of Restoration (3:19-36; 5:21)