

# Jeremiah

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The story of Jeremiah is one of courage, faithfulness, and devotion. Defying the popular image of the prophet as a mean and abrasive demagogue, Jeremiah's heart broke with grief as he delivered the message of God's judgment. Appropriately he has earned the nickname of the Weeping Prophet. Enduring the scornful attacks of the false prophets and his own friends, Jeremiah faithfully delivered the Word of the Lord as his nation collapsed around him. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the life and words of the prophet Jeremiah.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Jeremiah–Lamentations

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To summarize the life and call of the prophet Jeremiah.
2. To summarize Jeremiah's message of repentance.
3. To identify the enemies and attacks against Jeremiah's mission.

## QUOTATIONS

*It has often been remarked that Jeremiah's life was finally a failure. He was alone for most of his ministry. It seemed that no one gave any heed to his words. He was dragged off finally to live his last days in exile against his own will. He was a failure as the world judges human achievement. But a more balanced assessment of him would be that his*

*very words of judgment saved Israel's faith from disintegration, and his words of hope finally helped his people to gain hope in God's future for them.*

—J.A. Thompson

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The story of Jeremiah is one of courage, faithfulness, and devotion.
  1. Jeremiah was given the unenviable task of announcing God's judgment on His people and the city of Jerusalem.
  2. The nickname of Jeremiah is "The Weeping Prophet."
  3. Jeremiah wept over the destruction coming against his nation.
- B. Jeremiah was approximately 20 years old when he was called by God to be a prophet.
  1. Jeremiah was the last prophet of Judah before the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people to Babylon.
  2. "Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations'" (Jer. 1:4–5).
  3. Jeremiah's ministry lasted approximately fifty years.
  4. Jeremiah was from the tribe of Benjamin and was appointed to be a prophet to the nations.
  5. Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin and was appointed to be an apostle to the nations.
- C. "Then I said, 'Ah, LORD God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.'" (Jer. 1:6).
  - Jeremiah, like Moses, was a reluctant prophet.
- D. "But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, I am only a youth; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.' Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant'" (Jer. 1:7–10).

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- E. Jeremiah's mission was similar to Isaiah's in bringing a message of judgment and destruction against the people of God.
1. The message of both prophets was that God was going to pull down so that He could build, plant, and restore.
  2. Jeremiah was called particularly to the priests and religious guilds of his day more than the royal court.
- F. "The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 'Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD'" (Jer. 7:1-4).
1. One of the roles of the Old Testament prophet was to be a reformer.
  2. The prophets were innovative revolutionaries.
  3. Old Testament worship degenerated into ritualism, formalism, and syncretism.
  4. Repetition in Hebrew literature indicates emphasis.
  5. Jeremiah rebukes the people for putting their trust in the temple building and not in the Lord.
  6. Jeremiah invites the people to go to Shiloh and view the destroyed site at which the sanctuary once resided.
  7. Jerusalem will look like Shiloh after the judgment of God.
  8. There was no more incendiary message Jeremiah could have delivered to the priests than the destruction of the temple.
- G. "O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me" (Jer. 20:7a).
1. If God deceives a man, then that man is deceived.
  2. Jeremiah realizes he cannot fight God. God has overwhelmed him, and yet he suffers at the hands of his people.

3. “For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, ‘Violence and destruction!’ For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long” (Jer. 20:8).
  4. Every single day Jeremiah endured the reproach and the derision of his own people.
- H. “If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot” (Jer. 20:9).
1. The threat and abuse from his people was often too much for Jeremiah, and he wanted to abrogate his role as a prophet.
  2. Yet the Word of the Lord burned within him and he had to speak the Lord’s message to the people.
  3. “Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers. Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!” (Jer. 20:13–14).
  4. Jeremiah pours his heart out before God as he struggles with his calling as a prophet.
- I. “Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and because of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land mourns, and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right. Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares the LORD” (Jer. 23:9–11).
1. The false prophets hindered and opposed the message of Jeremiah.
  2. Jeremiah cried out for God to address his cause and crush his enemies.
- J. “I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully” (Jer. 23:25–28a).
- God promises to deal with the false prophets and calls Jeremiah to continue to faithfully preach the Word.

- K. Jeremiah prophesied of the coming Messiah and new covenant.
- “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: The LORD is our righteousness.” (Jer. 23:5–6).
- L. Jeremiah prophesied of the coming judgment, but also of the coming restoration.
1. He bought a field to symbolize his hope and confidence that God’s people would be restored to the land after the exile.
  2. God would raise Jerusalem again out of the ashes.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. Read the account of Jeremiah’s call in Jeremiah 1:4–10 and the account of Moses’ call in Exodus 4:10–17. How do the responses of Moses and Jeremiah to God’s call resemble each other?
2. Jeremiah prophesied from 626 BC until a little after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Read the oracle of coming judgment in Jeremiah 4. What words does Jeremiah use in verse 23 to describe the coming judgment? How do these words evoke the first chapter of Genesis? What is Jeremiah communicating to the people of Judah with this language, and how is the coming destruction of Jerusalem comparable to a return to the unformed state of creation?
3. According to Jeremiah 9:12–14, why is God bringing judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem?
4. Read the parable of the potter in Jeremiah 18:1–12 (compare Jer. 26:2–3), and then read Jonah 3:4–10. How is the principle found in verses 7–10 of Jeremiah’s parable illustrated in the book of Jonah?
5. Compare Jeremiah 23:5–6 with Isaiah 11:1–16. What are the similarities between the two prophecies? About whom do both prophets speak?
6. Read the prophecy of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–34. When will God establish the new covenant according to Jeremiah? Why is God going to establish a new covenant? How does Jeremiah emphasize discontinuity between the old and new covenants in verse 32? How does he emphasize both continuity and discontinuity in verse 33? What is the central promise of the new covenant in verse 34?

## DISCUSSION

1. How is the new covenant not like the old covenant? How is it *like* the old covenant? How do Hebrews 7 and 8 help us understand Christ's relationship to the new covenant?
2. In his book *The Christ of the Prophets*, O. Palmer Robertson argues that the prophetic oracles of judgment were primarily intended to produce repentance. He claims that the prophetic word "does not primarily involve prediction regarding future events" (p. 26). With Jeremiah's parable of the potter in mind (cf. Jer. 18:1-12), evaluate Robertson's premise.
3. Jeremiah 29 is a letter written by the prophet to the Judeans who had been sent away from their homeland into exile in 597 BC. In verse 7, Jeremiah instructs the exiles to seek the peace of Babylon and to pray for it as well. As Christians, we too are in one sense away from our homeland (Phil. 3:20) living as pilgrims in various earthly nations. How does Jeremiah's letter to the exiles inform us in our own earthly pilgrimage?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Kidner, Derek. *The Message of Jeremiah*  
Thompson, J.A. *The Book of Jeremiah*