

The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

Changing winds in Judah: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin as puppets of Egypt and Babylon. Jeremiah, the prophet and the book. Jeremiah's Call and Its Confirmation; Early; The Temple Sermon and Response to It; Oracles and Signs of Uncertain Date; Jeremiah's "Complaints"; Letter to the Jews in Captivity.

2 Kings 23:31–24:20; 2 Chronicles 36:1–16; Jeremiah 1–4, 7:1–8:3, 10–11, 13, 16, 20, 22:1–23:8, 26, 29, 36.

Changing Winds in Judah

Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim as puppets of Egypt and Babylon

- **Reign of Jehoahaz** (627–608 B.C.; 2 Kings 23:31–33; cf. 2 Chron. 36:1–4)
 - Shallum, a younger son of Josiah, is chosen to take the place of Josiah after his death in battle
 - Takes the name Jehoahaz but **rules only 3 months before Pharaoh Necho deposes him**
 - ***"did evil in the sight of the Lord"***
- **Reign of Jehoiakim** (608–597 B.C.; 2 Kings 23:34–37)
 - Another son of Josiah, Eliakim, **becomes the vassal of Egypt**
 - Takes the name Jehoiakim, meaning "YHWH has set up" (although actually the pharaoh did!)
 - ***Disregarded the reforms of Josiah; killed Uriah son of Shemaiah and persecuted Jeremiah***
 - After the Egyptians lost at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., **Jehoiakim changed sides, submitting to the Babylonians**
 - ***Hostages were taken to Babylon, including perhaps Daniel***
 - After three years he stopped paying tribute to the Babylonians and **reverted to an Egyptian allegiance**

Background of Jeremiah

- **Jeremiah = “YHWH will raise”**
- Priest from **Anatoth**
 - Home of the descendants of Abiathar, David's high priest deposed by Solomon
 - *Some scholars see his criticism of Jerusalem and the House of David as stemming from this*
 - In Benjamin, oriented culturally and religiously towards the northern kingdom
 - *Note his Mosaic prophetic rather than Davidic royal theology*
- Called as a child (more below), prophesied under five kings and one governor
- The “reluctant prophet” (1:6), the “weeping prophet” (9:1; 13:17), and the “lonely prophet” (16:2, forbidden to marry or have a family!)

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

5

The Book of Jeremiah

- Longest book in Hebrew Bible in terms of number of lines (Isaiah has more chapters)
- LXX and DSS versions *very different* in length and organization, suggesting a complicated compositional and editorial history
- **Types of material (genres)**
 - **Poetic oracles**
 - **Autobiographical accounts**
 - **Biographical narratives by a third party**
 - **Prose sermons (in the style of DH)**
 - Rabbinic tradition suggested that Jeremiah wrote the DH!
 - Perhaps Dtr editors added and reworked material

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

6

Overview of Jeremiah

- **Jeremiah's Call and Commission (1:1–19)**
- **Prophecies Concerning Judah (2:1–45:5)**
 - Judah's Willful Sin (2:1–3:5)
 - Judah's Chastening and Call to Repentance (3:6–6:30)
 - Judah's Wrong Religion (7:1–10:25)
 - **The Temple Sermon (7:1–8:3)**
 - Judah's Breaking of God's Covenant (11:1–13:27)
 - [Judah's Coming Drought (14:1–15:9)]
 - [Judah's Prophet Re-commissioned (15:10–17:27)]
 - [Judah and the Sovereign Potter (18:1–20:7)]
 - Judgment on the House of David (21:1–23:8)
 - [Judah's False Prophets (23:9–40)]
 - [Judah's Captivity (24:1–25:38)]
 - [Judah's Reaction to Jeremiah's Ministry (26:1–24)]
 - [Judah's Advice from Jeremiah: Submit to Nebuchadnezzar (27:1–29:32)]
 - **Judah's Hope of Restoration (30:1–33:26)**
 - **The Fall of Jerusalem (39:1–18)**
 - Events After the Fall of Jerusalem (40:1–45:5)
- **Prophecies Concerning the Nations (46:1–51:64)**
- **Historical Supplement (52:1–34)**
 - The Fate of Jerusalem (52:1–23)
 - The Fate of Certain People (52:24–34)

Chronology of Jeremiah

- Jeremiah is not in chronological order—putting the chapters in context is difficult but often important!

- Josiah chs. 1–6
- Jehoahaz (Shallum) 22:10–12
- Jehoiakim chs. 7–20, 25–26, 35–36, 45, 46:1–12, 47–49
- Jehoiachin chs. 22–23
- Zedekiah chs. 21, 24, 27–34, 37–39
- Gedaliah (governor) chs. 40–44; perhaps 30–31?

Jeremiah's Call and Its Confirmation (1:1–19)

Time of Josiah (c. 627–608 B.C.)

- His Call (1:1–10)
 - “Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*” (1:4–5)
 - “I am a child . . .” (1:6; cf. Moses, Enoch)
 - “Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, *Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.* See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.” (1:9–10)
- The Confirmation of the Call (1:11–19)
 - The almond tree (word play on *shaqed*, “almond,” and *shoqed*, “will watch over”)
 - Seething pot towards the north (future invasions coming from that direction)

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

9

First Oracular Poem (2:1–37)

Time of Josiah (c. 627–608 B.C.)

- Set up as a covenant lawsuit (*rîv*; see KJV “plead” in 2:9)
- A Israel’s faithfulness as a young bride (2:1–3)
- B Religious apostasy (2:4–13)
- C Political disloyalty (Egypt and Assyria, 2:14–19)
- B’ Religious apostasy (2:20–28)
- C’ Political disloyalty (2:29–37)

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

10

Call to Repentance (3:1–4:4)

Time of Josiah (c. 627–608 B.C.)

- Image of a faithless wife (3:1–5; see Deut. 14:1–4; Hosea)
- **Judah exceeded the bad example of her sister Israel (3:6–11)**
- First Summons (3:12)
- Second Summons (3:14)
- Third Summons (3:22)
- Fourth Summons (4:1–2)

“An Evil from the North”

Time of Josiah (c. 627–608 B.C.)

- **4:5–10:25 comprise a collection of oracles warning of an evil from the north, which is the usual direction of invasion**
- First prophecy of judgment (4:6–8)
- First interlude (4:9–12)
- Second prophecy of judgment (4:13–18)
- Second interlude (4:19–27)
 - Motif of “undoing creation” (4:23, 27)
- Third prophecy of judgment (4:28–31)

Judgment on the House of David

(22:1–23:8)

- **Exhortation to repent (22:1–9)**
- Jehoahaz (Shallum) dethroned by Egypt (22:10–12)
- Oracle against Jehoiakim (enthroned by Egypt, defected to Babylon, died during revolt against Babylon; 22:13–19)
- **Jerusalem will lament her humiliation (22:20–23)**
- Judgment against Jehoiachin (Coniah) (dethroned by Babylon, will not return; 22:24–30)
- **Restoration promised after exile (23:1–4)**
- **The Righteous Branch of David (Messianic prophecy, 23:5–8)**
 - “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that *I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.* In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**” (23:5–6)

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

13

The Temple Sermon (7:1–8:3; cf. 26:1–7)

Time of Jehoiakim (c. 608–579 B.C.)

- Introduction (7:1–2)
- First admonition (7:3–4)
 - Repent, do not blindly trust in a Zion theology
- Second admonition (7:5–8)
 - Repent seek social justice, avoid idolatry
- Rhetorical question (7:9–11)
 - ***The temple has become “a den of robbers” (cf. Matt. 21:13; Luke 19:46)***
- Threat: the example of Shiloh (7:12–15; cf. 1 Samuel 4)
- **Jeremiah forbidden to intercede (7:16–20)**
 - ***A prophet was supposed to be a messenger and a mediator!***
- **Obedience not sacrifice: Mosaic covenant enjoined (7:21–28)**
- Prose sermon on the fate of Judah (7:29–8:3)

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

14

Response to the Temple Sermon

Time of Jehoiakim (c. 608–579 B.C.)

- No doubt aroused **resistance from the temple hierarchy and royal establishment that supported a “Zion theology”**
 - The idea that Jerusalem would always be safe because of YHWH's presence in his temple; also connected to his support of the House of David
 - The miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib under Hezekiah seemed to support this (but Hezekiah was righteous!)
- **(Another) Temple Sermon (26:1–7)**
 - Like the Lord destroyed the sanctuary at the time of Eli, so will he destroy Jerusalem and its temple
- **Opposition of priests (26:8–11)**
- **Jeremiah's response: Repent and the Lord will relent (26:12–15)**
- The princes and people are moved (26:16–24)
 - Hezekiah pardoned Micah for preaching against Zion theology
 - *Jehoiakim, on the other hand, slew Uriah*
 - Ahikam intercedes for Jeremiah

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

15

The Scrolls of Jeremiah (36:1–32)

Time of Jehoiakim (c. 608–579 B.C.)

- Jeremiah was banned from the temple courts, so ***he had his faithful scribe Baruch (whose name means “Blessed”) write down another oracle against the people, king, and temple***
- The Scroll read in the temple (36:1–10)
- The scroll read in the palace (36:11–19)
- **Jehoiakim burns the scroll (36:20–26)**
- **Jeremiah dictates a second scroll, repeating the words of the first scroll and adding many others—the heart of our Book of Jeremiah (36:27–32)**

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

16

Oracles and Signs of Uncertain Date

- **Idolatry has brought disaster on Israel (10:1–16)**
 - Constitutes an “**idol satire**,” where passages mocking idolatry alternate with **hymnic passages praising the Lord**
- The Coming Exile (10:17–25)
- The Broken Covenant (11:1–17)
- **The Sign of the Linen Loincloth (13:1–11)**
- **Sign of the Wine Jars (13:12–14)**
- The Tragedy of Exile (13:15–27)
- **The Celibacy of Jeremiah (16:1–13)**
- **God Will Restore Israel (16:14–21)**
 - “fishers and hunters” (16:14–16)
 - **Negative:** Babylonians and Egyptians will hunt fugitive Judahites
 - **Positive:** latter-day missionaries will find scattered Israel

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

17

Jeremiah’s “Complaints”

- Sometimes called Jeremiah’s Laments, but here “laments” ≠ “Lamentations”
- **Autobiographical passages addressed to God that are stunningly honest about Jeremiah’s feelings towards his mission and his frustration with not always understanding the Lord or his plans**
 - Sometimes called “Jeremiah’s confessions”
 - **11:18–23; 12:1–6; 15:10–18; 17:14–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–13**
- **Undated Example (11:18–23)**
 - **Jeremiah’s poetic complaint: the plot against his life (11:18–20)**
 - **God’s prose response: he will punish Jeremiah’s enemies (11:21–23)**
- **Example dating to his rejection at the time of Jehoiakim (c. 608–579 B.C.; 20:7–13)**
 - **Pashur persecutes Jeremiah (20:1–7)**
 - **Jeremiah’s complaint: “O Lord, thou has deceived me . . . But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay . . . Cursed be the day wherein I was born” (20:7–18)**

3/18/2009

20. The Final Decline of Judah; Jeremiah I

18

Letter to Jews in Captivity (29:1–32)

- **Written after Jehoiachin, his court, the nobles, many priests, and craftsmen were taken in the first deportation into Babylonian exile (c. 597 B.C.)**
- **Encourages the exiles to establish themselves for a long sojourn and not to expect a quick restoration to their homeland**
 - “Build ye houses and dwell in them . . . Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives . . .” (29:5–7)
 - **The captivity will last “seventy” years (29:10)**
 - A round figure, a “long time” (two generations), time from destruction of the first temple to the dedication of the second (587–516 B.C.)?
- **God will hear their prayers even in a foreign land (29:12–13)**
 - *Ancient people often thought that their gods were tied to the land they inhabited*
- Rebuke of the false prophet Shemaiah who had written the exiles telling them they would soon be restored . . .
- ***Among the exiles in Babylon was Ezekiel . . .***