

A LOOK AT THE BOOK JEREMIAH

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AUTHOR

Jeremiah was from the tribe of Levi. His family belonged to the priestly order. His home was in Anathoth, about three miles from Jerusalem. From childhood on, Jeremiah was familiar with Jerusalem and knew what was happening there. Israel's throne had been occupied by rebellious men, separated from fellowship with God. The people followed the example of their kings.

God called Jeremiah when he was barely twenty years old. He was too young to be a prophet. In spite of the difficulty, he served God for more than forty years during a period of great apostasy. They rejected his message and therefore he suffered considerable persecution. He tried to forget the ministry several times but each time he felt obligated to come back.

When Babylon conquered Jerusalem, he had a chance to leave with the captives. He decided to stay to help the people still in Jerusalem. After the assassination of Gedaliah, the governor, those who escaped to Egypt took Jeremiah with them. There he preached his last message to them.

HISTORICAL SITUATION

International situation

When Jeremiah began his ministry, a world war was approaching. There was considerable competition between the three main world powers:

Assyria had been in control for 300 years, but was losing control over the other nations.

Babylon was getting stronger all the time.

Egypt wanted its old power back.

Babylon attacked Assyria; later Egypt came to help Assyria. Babylonia defeated both and set up a new empire. Israel was caught in the middle and suffered from all sides. The competing nations crossed their national territory to make war. After conquering the other two main powers, Babylonia invaded Jerusalem three times. The last time, Jerusalem was destroyed.

National situation

Israel's rebellion was apparent from the beginning. The northern kingdom was judged and taken captive in 722 B.C. Instead of learning from their example, Judah followed in the same path. Only two kings faithfully followed Yahweh after the fall of the northern kingdom: Hezekiah and Josiah.

Josiah was on the throne when God called Jeremiah. Josiah's sons went right back to the old gods and their pagan customs. The invasions from Babylon should have warned them, but they paid no attention. In 586 B.C., God judged them, sending Babylonia to destroy Jerusalem.

Israel's national lifestyle was marked by sin and idolatry. They were practicing empty religious ritual. They were not in fellowship with God, and didn't really want to be. The rich became richer; they exploited the poor, widows and orphans. Apparently nobody even cared about these conditions.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Announcement of **judgment** in order to bring **repentance**. Later, after the judgment, consolation and encouragement were given, to motivate them to turn back to God.

The book answers question: **Why has this happened to us?** God never permits His people to live in persistent sin. Therefore, he sent messengers to warn the people. In spite of this, they went on in their empty rituals, never looking for Him. The warning is to give them one more chance to repent.

WHAT LESSONS SHOULD WE LEARN FROM THE STUDY OF THIS PROPHECY?

External rituals of worship aren't enough! God wants the intimate communion that we enjoy when we trust Him.

People who genuinely trust God desire to please Him. God wants us to love Him and trust Him.

JEREMIAH

An Ounce of Prevention . . .

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