**Jeremiah: The Burden of the Lord**

Q: Have you ever known someone who only shared bad news?

Jeremiah had two nicknames:

1. The weeping prophet.

2. The burden (oracle, *masah*) of the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:33) (Vulgate, Septuagint “burden”)

Background: Jeremiah 1:1-3.

a. 13th year of Josiah (627 BC) One year after his reform. Started out great. (ruled 640-609). Killed by Egyptians aaaaat Megiddo defending Babylonians.

b. Jehoahaz 609 3 months. Deposed by Pharaoh.

c. Jehoiakim 609-597 Unfaithful, worshipped Baal, etc. surrendered to Babylon, rebelled went to Egypt.

d. Jeconiah/Jehoiachin 597 Also unfaithful. Blinded and taken into exile.

e. Zedekiah 597-586 Also unfaithful. Very weak and easily influenced. Turned to Egypt again (despite warnings from Jeremiah and Ezekiel). Jerusalem destroyed, temple burned.

d. Captivity and humility. Rebelled again. Ishmael murdered Gedaliah. The people panic. Jeremiah taken to Egypt. This group never returned to Israel.

e. Stoned to death in Egypt (according to Jewish tradition). Bummer!

Chronology of Jeremiah: It can be difficult to follow the historical context of various passages in Jeremiah. Below is an approximate time frame for the various episodes in the book:

Ch 1-20 *For the most part*, these prophecies come from 627-605 BC—before Jeremiah was commanded to write down his prophecies and give them to Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 25:1-3)

Ch 21 Final siege begins 588

Ch 22 Oracles on kings to Jehoiachin 598

Ch 23 unsure

Ch 24 Good and bad figs 597 or after

Ch 25 70 years predicted 605

Ch 26 Shiloh sermon 609 or after

Ch 27-28 Accept yoke of Babylon 594

Ch 29 Letter to captives after 597

Ch 30-31 unsure

Ch 32-33 Jeremiah buys property 588/87

Ch 34 Siege temporarily lifted 588

Ch 35 Recabites after 601

Ch 36 Burning the scroll 605-604

Ch 37 Jeremiah imprisoned 588

Ch 38 Jeremiah in the muddy well 588/87

Ch 39 Jerusalem falls 586

Ch 40 Gedaliah at Mizpah 586

Ch 41 Gedaliah assassinated 586 or after

Ch 42-43 Emigration to Egypt 586 or after

Ch 44 Jews in Egypt defend actions 585

Ch 45 A message to Baruch 605

Ch 46-51 unsure

Ch 52 Epilogue conderning Jehoiachin 561

Jeremiah’s prophetic career spanned exactly 40 years (627-587). Interesting.

Themes in Jeremiah:

I. Admonitions against false religion

II. God’s judgment on his people and on the enemies of his people

III. Restoration of the remnant

Passages about the remnant:

Jer 6:9 God gleans the remnant

Jer 29:1-11 God has plans for the remnant (written within days of captivity)

Jer 31:7, Jer 33:14-18 God saves the remnant

Jer 39:9 God directs the remnant

Jer 40:11 God abundantly blesses the remnant

Jer 42:1-3, 15, 19 God releases the remnant

Jer 43:4-7, 44:14

Jer 50:20 God forgives the remnant

A few things to bear in mind as you read Jeremiah:

Jeremiah uses metaphors/symbol a lot:

Jer 1:11-16 The Almond Tree

Jer 13:1-11 The Linen Belt

Jer 13:12-14 The Wineskins

Jer 18:1-10 The Potter’s House

Jer 19:10-13 The Jar

Jer 24:1-10 The Fig baskets

Jer 27:1-8 The Yoke

Jer 32:1-41 The Field

Jer 43: 8-13 The Stones

Another point about Jeremiah: Of all the Old Testament prophets and writers, he sounds the most modern. The issues he raises sound very familiar. The kinds of attitudes and sins he deals with are very “modern.” Francis Schaeffer (*Death in the City*) called Jeremiah the quintessential prophet for the postmodern age, with its moral relativism and its “open-mindedness.” “Jeremiah provides us with an extended study of an era like our own, where men have turned away from God, and society has become post-Christian.”

Another point about Jeremiah is that he is very pointed and open about his negative feelings when he talks to God.

Ex:

Jeremiah 4:10 “You have deceived this people and Jerusalem by saying, ‘You will have peace,’ when the sword is at our throats.

Jeremiah 12:1 “You are always righteous, O Lord, when I bring a case before you, Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do the faithless live at ease?” [note God’s response in 12:5 If you have raced with men… It will get even harder for you in the future]

[Also Jer 15:10-18, to which God offers admonishment v. 19 and encouragement v.20-21 and Jer 20:7-10, 14-18]

If we look at the chronology, we will discover that after about 588 BC, Jeremiah no longer questioned God’s judgment or his own prophetic call.

Another note about Jeremiah: He is a prophet of social justice.

Jer 5:26-29 …they have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?

Jeremiah 22:15-16 Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? Declares the Lord.

Jer 22:2-3 To the king: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do not wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. He says that if they do so, they will never fail to have a king on David’s throne (22:4)

(also Jer 7:5-7)

Outline of Jeremiah:

I. Jeremiah’s mission Ch 1

II. God’s charge against his people Ch 2 You have left God!

III. Jeremiah’s message Ch 3-5 Return and repent!

IV. Jeremiah’s critique Ch 6 The leaders say peace, peace…

V. Judgment is coming on Judah Ch 7-22

VI. Good News! Ch 23-33 God will gather a remnant to be with him.

VII. History surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem Ch 34-45

VIII. Judgment on Judah’s enemies Ch 46-51.

IX. Epilogue Ch 52 The Fall of Jerusalem

Archaeology and Jeremiah

Three events recorded in Jeremiah are well confirmed by archaeological discovery

1. The fall (but not destruction) of Jerusalem in 597 BC

2. The destruction of Lachish.

3. The raising up of Jehoiachin by Evil-Merodach 560 BC

1. The fall (but not destruction) of Jerusalem in 597 BC This is confirmed by the Babylonian Chronicles.

These events are recorded in 2 Kings 24:10-17 2 Chronicles 36:5-7

 [In] the seventh year, the month of Kislev, the king of

 Babylonia mustered his forces and marched to Syria. He

camped against the city of Judah (Jerusalem) and on the

second day of the month of Adar he took the city and captured

the king. He appointed a king of his own choice there, took its

heavy tribute and brought them to Babylon.

The puppet king was Zedekiah.

2. The destruction of Lachish is confirmed by the Lachish Letters 586 BC

The Lachish Letters 588 BC 6 letters on clay shards

One letter: “The light at the top of Azekah just went out, and we are next. Send an army of relief or the city will fall to Nebuchadnezzar.”

This confirms Jeremiah 34:6,7

Within two days, the author of this letter was killed. Two years later, Jerusalem fell.

Remember: All this was prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 39 envoys) and in Deuteronomy 29:15, 49f If you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and over take you: The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth

3. The raising up of Jehoiachin by Evil-Merodach in 560 BC (Jeremiah 52:31-34)

In the ruins of Babylon a document was found which listed the provisions for Jehoachin.

“Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.” (2 Kings 25:27-30, Jer 52:31-34).

All this is confirmed by the discovery in Babylon of the order to take care of Jehoiachin.

Tablets from the royal archives of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon were unearthed in the ruins of that ancient city that contain food rations paid to

captives and craftsmen who lived in and around the city. On one of the tablets, **"Yaukin, king of the land of Judah"** is mentioned along with his five sons listed as royal princes. Below are a few inscriptions found on the tablets: 10 (sila of oil) to the king of Judah, Yaukin.

2 1/2 sila (oil) to the offspring of Judah’s king,

4 sila to eight Judean men.

These tablets also indicate that Jehoiachin received twenty times as much food rations as others on the list which indicates that the Babylonians treated him more valuable then other captive kings on the list.

Archaeology thus indicates that Jehoiachin was treated well by the kings of Babylon whom provided daily food rations for him.

I. The Call of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:4-19 Jeremiah’s mission:

1. v. 4-5 I have set you apart before you were born as “a prophet to the nations.”
2. Say whatever I command you. 1:7-8, 1:17
3. His mission is to preach judgment is coming. A seething cauldron (1:13) Disaster from the North (Babylon) 1:14
4. But he also has a positive mission to build and to plant (1:9) His message is like the branch of an almond tree (the first to bud in the early spring) 1:11

Q: Is this our mission? Is it to “tell them everything that I command you.” (v. 17)

No wonder Jeremiah was not all that excited to preach (1:6) Jeremiah got some bad treatment. Jeremiah 20:1-18. Esp v. 9 Q: Are you prepared to be a “laughing stock?” Are you prepared to “sit alone?” Jer 15:17. Are you prepared to be thrown into a miry pit? Jer 38:6

But we should remember that God will put words in our mouth (Luke 12:11-12) He is with us in this You will be my spokesman Jer 15:19 I will be with you and will rescue you Jer 1:8, Jer15:20)

Jeremiah should not be afraid 1:8, as God will deliver him. He is an iron pillar, a bronze wall, a fortified city 1:18.

II. God’s charge against his people. They have betrayed God’s love. They have gone after other lovers.

Jer. 2:4-5 Is God exaggerating?

v. 5 Is God enough for you? Or do you need more? Are you willing to accept what God gives you?

You (v. 6) and the priests (v. 8) do not ask “Where is the Lord?” I was not sophisticated enough to you. I did not appeal to your fancy. I became quaint to you.

2:11-13 Q: How do we become worthless? Answer: By seeking the blessings of the world rather than the blessings God offers.

v. 11 Has a nation ever changed its gods? Even the pagans are at least loyal to their national deities! But not you!

v. 13 Q: Have you “dug your own cisterns”—looked for satisfying water elsewhere than in the living water from God? Jer 18:14-15a God’s living water is an unending stream, yet we have forgotten him.

2:20-22 You are like a runaway bride—loved deeply by her lover, yet you went for prostitution. (also 2:32)

v. 23 You are like a wild donkey in heat…

v. 27 We say to an inanimate piece of wood, “You are our father.” Who, me???? (Rom 1:25)

 **Titus 1:15-16**

III. Jeremiah’s message: 3:14-18 3:22 4:1-4 4:8

Return, Repent

3:14-18 Return and I will choose you. I will bring you back from the northern land and I will make a new covenant.

3:22 Return from backsliding. To backslide is not to leave God. It is to no longer do what you did before (evangelism, prayer, zeal, etc.). Sounds like Rev 2:1-7 Ephesus disciples lost their first love.

4:1-4 What “unplowed ground” do you need to break up? What area in your life have you allowed to become hard and unpenetrable to God’s Words?

4:8 Do you need to put on sackcloth and ashes? (ie not take care of even your most basic needs as you attend to repentance) (like 2 Cor 7:11-12)

The result: Disaster from the North (Babylon) 4:5,6 a lion = Babylon (also 6:22f)

4:19 “My guts, my guts.” Jeremiah’s (God’s?) anguish. Disaster!

Jer 4:23-26 The natural result of sin: an empty life in ruins.

The postmodern attitude: Jer 5:12-13

Jeremiah: a prophet of social justice. Jer 5:26-29

One of my favorite passages in Jeremiah—so relevant for the postmodern, post-Christian world: Jer 5:30-31 A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it that way. But what will you do in the end?

This is our struggle!!!

IV Jeremiah’s critique: Jer 6:13-15 The leaders dress the wounds of my people lightly. They say “peace, peace.” (parallel passage: Jer 8:8-12)

v. 15 no longer ashamed…. Some of us are no longer ashamed of worldly behavior. Movies we go to, the places we go to, Missing church is not as big a deal as it once was…. Some of us have begun to tell little lies… Some of us have begun to do things at work that we hope our spiritual friends do not find out about. Are you able to be ashamed as you once were?

Some of us are no longer willing to confront it.

If you are friends of the world, it is no longer peace, peace.

(sounds like 2 Tim 4:1-5 Some seek to have their ears itched. Is that you?)

God’s solution: 6:16-20 Stand at the crossroads and look…. Seek the good way and walk in it.

We already know what to do…. Of course for the “modern,” the ancient truth is out of fashion—obsolete. Let us beware of this philosophy.

6:20 It is not simply about being more religious.

(Parallel passage Jeremiah 23:16-24, 33-40)

V. Judgment is coming! Jer 7-22 Lots more bad news we will skip False religion, Slaughter, Punishment, Destruction, Broken Covenant, Drought, Famine, Sword, Disaster

Jer 7:1-8 God’s word to the religious: Do not trust in vain words—“The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.”

The sanctuary will not save you if you are not sanctified.

Q: What might the modern equivalent be?

Trusting in the church/the fellowship rather than trusting in Jesus, the head of the church. It is tempting for church leaders to encourage this kind of behavior.

Note, again, the opposite of trusting in vain words, is to practice social justice. v.5-6.

Notice: Jesus quoted Jer 7:11 in Matthew 21:13 Might we view the church as the source of our livelihood or a business opportunity?

Jer 7:30-34 an ironic prophecy which was fulfilled when the Valley of Ben Hinnom became the Valley of Gehenna—the perpetually burning dump of Jerusalem which was used as a metaphor of Hell by Jesus.

Jer 15:1-2 Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Death, sword, starvation, captivity. (Ezek 14:13-14)

Jer 15:6 We send ourselves to destruction by rejecting God’s love. (Matthew 23:37-38… but you would not have me. Behold, your house lies forsaken and desolate.)

Jer 17:5-10 Do not trust in man.

17:5 Do not trust in man

17:7 Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord

17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things

17:10 I, the Lord, search the heart.

17:19-27 If you keep the Sabbath, you will have kings on their throne in Jerusalem forever, but if you do not, I will kindle an unquenchable fire.

Q: Is God exaggerating? As how we view and use our money is an accurate reflection of how we view God, so how we accept and use an opportunity from God to rest, reflect and enjoy a relationship (putting aside the worries, pleasures and attractions of the world) with him is an accurate reflection of our wider spiritual health. Thus, this is not a gross exaggeration. Amos 8:5 expresses this well. “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market meat.” (also Isaiah 58:13-14)

 Jer. 18 At the potter’s house. Jer 18:1-12 Q: What is God saying about us? The pot was marred, so he formed it into something different.

v. 12 The people’s response: It is no use. We will not change. Jer 19:1-10 Jeremiah stood in front of the elders and (v. 10) he shattered the pot. These people are past remaking. May this never happen to us! Judgment and doom!

Jer 20 Jeremiah and Pashhur. Jeremiah put in the stocks. We have already looked at this. This chapter includes one of the classic passages in Jeremiah. After being beaten and put in the stocks for preaching judgment on the lost, he said (about the insult and reproach for speaking the truth),

“But if I say, ‘I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed I cannot.” (Jer 20:9)

Jeremiah 21 Flee the city!!! Surrender!!!! Jeremiah a traitor

[we have already seen Jer 22:15-17, but it bears reminder… Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar?]

VI. Jeremiah announces good news. God will restore a remnant. Ch 23-33

Ultimately, Jeremiah is a prophet of good news!!!!

Jeremiah 23:1-8 God will gather a remnant and place shepherds over them.

v. 5 a righteous branch. Notice, the Hebrew for branch is *nazer* so when Jesus is called the branch, this is fulfilled in that he is the “branch” of David/Jesse (Isaiah 11:1,10), but also in that he is a Nazarene.

About Matthew 2:23, I will have to say that this one gave me a problem for
several years. I finally figured it out just a few years ago. In the Hebrew, the word Nazareth is *nazaret*,the same as the word branch. It is very interesting that God caused the Messiah, Jesus, to be raised in Nazareth because Nazareth means branch. There are several Old Testament passages which prophesy that the Messiah will be called the branch, which can also be interpreted as Nazarene. It is interesting and wonderful that Jesus was both the branch of Jesse and a Nazarene. This is one of hundreds of amazing pieces of evidence which proves conclusively that the entire Bible is inspired by God. The relevant passages are
Isaiah 11:1,2 Jeremiah 23:5 Zechariah 3:8 and Zechariah 6:12. You should
not be surprised that a Jewish person who r

v. 6 a king. The Lord our Righteousness.

v. 7-8 a double prophecy.

Jer 25:8-14 70 years Is this the passage Daniel was reading in Dan 9:1f?

Jeremiah 29:10-14 I will rescue you from captivity. I will bring you back to the Promised Land.

Do you believe God has great plans for you if you will plow up the unplowed ground, seek the ancient paths, and seek him with all your heart?

Will you wait seventy years for God to bless you?

Jeremiah 30:1-11

v. 10 Has God saved you from a distant place?

Jeremiah 31:27-37 More good news.

Q: How is the New Covenant different from the Old? (v. 32)

v. 28 A covenant only of blessing.

v. 29-30 About individuals in a relationship with God. (no more 70 year captivities) No more group blessings and curses (such as Deut 29,30)

v. 34 It won’t be you are born then you get to know me. You will be born knowing me.

v. 34 Does this mean we do not need to teach one another? (Matt 28:20)

v. 34b I will forgive their wickedness. (Q: Wasn’t that also true with Israel? Heb 9:6-10, 10:15-18

v. 35-37 Great assurance!

Jer 32:1-15 Jeremiah buys a field. This represents confidence that God will do what he says.

Note v. 4 Zedekiah will see it all with his own eyes (but then will have his eyes taken out)

Destruction (v. 26-29) and renewal (36-44)

(if time) Jeremiah 33:12-22 Still more encouragement. Why does God make such a strong promise?

VII. Historical events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem Ch 34-45

In this section, note that all of Jeremiah’s former prophecies concerning Jerusalem are fulfilled. No wonder Jeremiah was ultimately received as a prophet, and no wonder his book entered the Hebrew canon.

Jer 35:1-16 The Recabites.

Q: What is God’s point to his people?

Q: What is God’s message to us? (non-attachment)

Jer 36:1-3 What was on the scroll?

36:4 What if they had repented?

36:15-26 How might we be like Jehoiakim?

Q: Did God’s word work? (Isaiah 55:11) Is it true that God’s word always works (either to judge or to save).

36:27-32 We cannot destroy God’s word, but if we reject his word we will be destroyed.

Jer 37 Zedekiah replaces Jehoiachin. V. 1-3

37:9 Do not trust in Egypt. God’s plans are set.

37:13 Jeremiah inspects his property, is accused of treason with Babylonians, beaten and jailed.

Jer 38:1-3 Jeremiah prophesies—speaks treason. Zedekiah not very happy. v. 4-6 lowered into a cistern. Jeremiah is getting to a pretty low place.

38:17-18 God is upset when we do not accept the discipline he puts into our lives. 38:19 Zedekiah’s excuse.

Jer 39 Jerusalem falls

Jer 40:1-6 Nebuchadnezzar frees Jeremiah, leaves Gedaliah in charge. Israel to serve Babylon (v. 9) 70 years.

Jer 41 Gedaliah assassinated, Jews flee to Egypt.

Jer 42:10-12 Serve Nebuchadnezzar I will save and deliver you. Will you trust God?

Jer 42:19-22 If you go to Egypt, you will die by the sword.

42:19 A clarion call to all who would follow God. DO NOT GO TO EGYPT!

VIII. Judgment on Judah’s enemies. Ch 46-51

We will be skipping Jer 46-51 Judgment on the enemies of God (similar to Ezekiel 25-32).

The point of this section: God will judge his people, but the enemies of God should not take confidence from this. 1 Pet 4:17.

Jer 52. This is an epilogue, added by a Jewish editor. Jer 51:64 “the words of Jeremiah end here.”

Jeremiah 52 The fall of Jerusalem.

Jer 52:31-34 has been confirmed by archaeological discovery in Babylon, as mentioned previously.