

Jeremiah

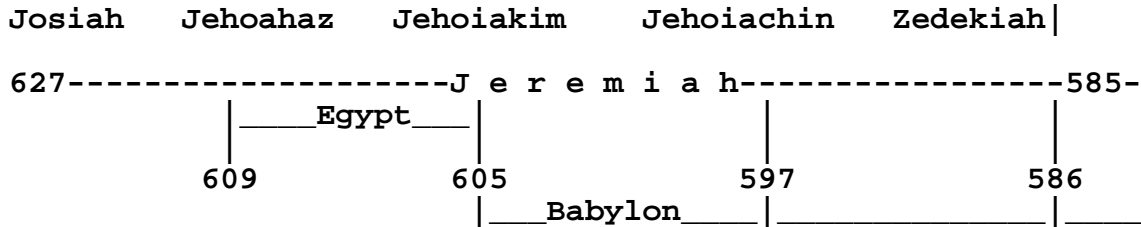
Introduction

The genre of Jeremiah appears to be a collection of prophecies and historical narrative. Perhaps we can call it historically rooted prophecy.

1A. The Political situation (cf. Judaic Kingdom)

Jeremiah lived during the period of Babylonian ascendancy.

He locates his prophetic ministry in overview in relation to kings of Judah from Josiah to Zedekiah (Jer. 1:2-3), which is from 627 to 586 when Zedekiah was taken to Babylon. Jeremiah's last year of ministry was in Egypt in 585.



Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle king of Judah calling him Zedekiah (24:17). Zedekiah also rebelled against the king of Babylon. So in his ninth to eleventh years Jerusalem was under siege by Nebuchadnezzar. In 586, Zedekiah was captured, his sons were killed before his eyes, he was blinded and shackled for Babylon. The temple was destroyed along with the city walls as the people were taken into exile (2Ki 25:9-11) by the hand of God being "thrust from his presence" (2Ki 24:20).

The statement "so Judah went into captivity, away from her land" (2 Kgs. 25:21) must include all the stages of exile beginning in 605 when Daniel and others were first taken.

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah as a puppet ruler who was later assassinated. Because of this assassination many people fled to Egypt taking Jeremiah along with them.

Among other things, Jeremiah records the events from the fall of Jerusalem under Zedekiah to his final words to the exiles in Egypt in 585 B.C. (Jer. 39-44; 585 B.C., IOT 302).

Most of the prophecies pertain to events after 609 (LaSor 404).

2A. The Prophet (IOT 287-289)

1B. Celibate life

Jeremiah was called to a life of celibacy as a sign of what God is about to do to the sons and daughters who will perish by sword and famine (16:1-9) for doing "more wickedly than your fathers" (16:12). No longer will it be said that Israelites came up out of Egypt but instead "up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them" (16:14-15) for I will restore them (v. 15).

2B. The burned scroll/conflict with the king

The reason for judgment (36:31; IOT 288) is typified in the burning of the scroll of God's word before which the king, Jehoiakim, showed no fear (36:24-25).

3B. Betrayal

The betrayal of Jeremiah by his own family indicates the ruining of God's vineyard that will lead to it becoming a wasteland (12:6; 10-11). Yet there will be compassion after uprooting (12:15) if they learn and obey (12:16-17).

He was betrayed by the priests and prophets of Judah who called him a blasphemer (26:1-6). A case in point was the conflict with the false prophet Hananiah (28). Jeremiah had proclaimed that the surrounding nations should bow to Nebuchadnezzar, discounting any prophet who encouraged opposition to Nebuchadnezzar.

4B. Divine Call

Jeremiah was called of God "as a prophet to the nations" (1:5). To this he was appointed before he was formed in the womb for he was known by the Lord. This means he was chosen by God's electing love.

In his very calling he embodied the purpose of God in history that operates on a principle of sovereign election. Fallen man is being restored by God's distinguishing love; otherwise he consistently moves in a downward spiral of disobedience.

Jeremiah's relation to the nations is prophetic. He will speak God's summons of the nations to pour out disaster on Judah like water from a boiling pot (1:9-10; 14-15).

5B. Prophetic experience

The prophet will be opposed on every hand but he will stand as a fortified city (1:17-19). He will be whipped and put in stocks (20:1-2); accused of treason, sedition, and desertion (26, he was spared but Uriah was not, v. 23). During Zedekiah's final days Jeremiah was beaten and imprisoned in a vaulted cell in a dungeon for a long time (37:15-16) then held under court yard arrest until the day Jerusalem was captured (38:28). In this time of arrest, he was lowered by ropes into a muddy cistern to be spared death there by the intercession of a Cushite (38:6,7 13).

3A. Message

1B. Personal Confessions

The prophet's own experience is background for his personal outcries and "confessions" of "feeling abandoned by God" and questioning the goodness of God while calling for judgment on the nations:

10:23-25 - correction & judgment

11:18-12:6 - lamb to slaughter (betrayed by brothers)

15:10-21 - eating God's word; opposed but saved

17:9-18 - heart is deceitful; I have not run from shepherding

18:18-23 - attacked and calling for judgment

20:7-18 - I feel deceived but thy word is a fire in my bones and I cannot hold it in; the language of Job 3 is applied to those who opposed the word of Jeremiah and thus who oppose God.

2B. Hope

Jeremiah's message is judgment with a glimmer of hope in the backdrop. The boiling pot tips from the north where Judah will be taken (1:13-16) because they have forsaken the spring of living water (2:13) and turned a choice vine into a wild one (2:21); as an unfaithful sister to Israel Judah is also adulterous (3:8-10).

But there will be a chosen remnant (3:14-18). The sovereign God of the nations will keep covenant in spite of judgment that falls out from his holiness due to Israel's covenant breaking (11). The book ends with Jehoiachin's release.

Against this backdrop Jeremiah stands as a gentle lamb led to slaughter by an unfaithful people suggesting the deliverance of Isaiah 53 as an aspect of restoration (the prophet of God is also lamb of God).

Betrayed by his own, the prophet will live by the word of God as bread, he will call out in despair feeling forsaken of God (20). His message is gospel.

This will lead to covenant keeping as embodied in the Sabbath (17:19-27). There must be covenant keeping to inherit the land (11) and it will emerge by God's electing love (3:14-18).

3B. 70 years captivity

The prophecy is stated in Jeremiah 25:1-14 (and given before 605 (in the 4th year of Jehoiakim). Also, 29:10ff.

Why the 70? Failure to keep the Sabbath (Jer. 17:21-27; 2 Chron. 36:21). Disobedience to God's law as epitomized in the 4th commandment is stressed here.

How 70 Sabbaths? These are judgment sabbaths because of disobedience to God embodied in Sabbath breaking. In other words, the land rested as it should have but it rested for 70 consecutive years instead of every 7th year. Therefore, they had 70 Sabbaths in a row!

This represents 490 years; it is as if 490 years unfolded; the 490 are telescoped into 70 actual years; thus it is a ten-fold judgment, there are ten six-one's with the six as well as the one being years of non-productivity in the land).

You have broken the sabbath so you will have a ten-fold sabbath judgment of 70 actual years that represent 490 years because the land leaped from desolation to desolation without the intervening intervals of labor (we have a ten-fold judgment that is like compressing 490 normal years of six and one into 70 sabbath judgment years).

Thus instead of six years of productivity and one of non-productivity, they had 70 consecutive years of no productivity. Sabbath was kept in judgment.

This will be important for us to keep in focus when we work with the book of Daniel.

Where do the 70 years begin and end? If a literal 70 is meant and not a rounding off of an approximation, then the best dates seem to be from 605 to 536, from Nebuchadnezzar's first stage of taking captives from Jerusalem to three years after the decree of Cyrus (539) when the foundation of the temple was rebuilt (Ezra 3:8; 536 B.C.).

4A. Outline

Prophecies against Judah 1-25
 The life of Jeremiah 26-45
 Prophecies against the nations 46-51
 The fall of Jerusalem 52

5A. Theme

God's prophet must stand against the whole land as a lamb led to slaughter and as one betrayed by his brothers to proclaim 1) the boiling pot of judgment that tilts away from the north to give 70 judgment sabbaths and 2) the new covenant with Israel and Judah that will write the law on the hearts of those who trust in the Lord (17:7).

6A. Message for us

Most of the quotes in the NT from Jeremiah pertain to the destruction of Babylon in the book of Revelation.

1) But Paul made application of Jeremiah's visit to the house of a potter (Jer. 18; Rom. 9:19-21) to teach how Jeremiah's rule over the nations expresses God's sovereignty (cf. God's command gave Nebuchadnezzar his success, 27:6, my servant!).

Jeremiah's call helps us understand foreknowledge in Romans 8:29. It is not good foresight (as know is not factual grasp, Amos 3:2). Instead, it is intimate knowing beforehand, before birth. Thus, it refers to electing love: "those whom God lovingly chose, these he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son and these are called, justified, and glorified.

2) Thus when God judges Israel by the nations, in covenant mercy and grace, he calls forth a new Israel from the nations, a new Israel made up of Jew and Gentile alike (Jer. 3:17-18, all nations in Jerusalem; Rom. 9:20-24).

3) There is focus on Christ. Rachel's weeping for her children going into captivity (Jer. 31:15) looked ahead to Herod's massacre (Mt. 2:17-18). The branch (Jer. 23:5) is Jesus (Lk. 1:78); the new covenant (Jer. 31) is realized through the Passover lamb of Passover lambs (Heb. 8, 10; Lk. 22).

Jesus has come to cleanse the temple (Jer. 7:9-11; Mk. 9:17) and thus bring restoration from the fall, judgment, and captivity.

4) Our duty is to trust in the Lord who strove against sin unto blood before the evil hearts of men, 17:9. Like Jeremiah, Jesus was a lamb for slaughter and as the ultimate lamb he confessed his sin in our place (baptized by John). So, trust in Him and find rest of soul because he confessed our sins as his own (17:7; Matt. 11:28-30).