

Study questions (Jeremiah)

1. What is the significance of Jeremiah's call to celibacy?

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).

2. Why 70 years of captivity?

The prophecy is stated in Jeremiah 25:1-14 (and given before 605 (in the 4th year of Jehoiakim). Also, 29:10ff. The reason for the 70 years is the 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.

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. Sabbath was kept in judgment.

3. 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.).

4. What is a compressed theme statement for the book of Jeremiah?

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; cf. 31:13f).