

PREPARATION FOR LESSON: Read Jeremiah, chapters 1, 2, 6, 29, 36, 38, 43, 52

BACKGROUND

Author: Spoken by Jeremiah; written down by Baruch, a scribe

Levite from Judah; called to be a prophet in his early 20's; unmarried

Promised protection by God during his ministry

Contemporary of Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Obadiah

When he is 45, he knows Daniel and Ezekiel as teenagers

Dies as martyr after 5 years in Egypt; stoned to death by Jews (based on Jewish tradition)

Date and Place of Ministry: He taught 47 years in Jerusalem and Egypt from 627-580 BC

His book was put together over many years by one or more scribes

Theme: Judah's rejection of God

Purposes: To urge Judah's repentance in face of coming judgment.

To encourage and instruct the exiles in Babylon; the exile will last 70 years.

To promise restoration after the exile.

Scripture background: 2 Kings 22:3 – 25:30; 2 Chronicles 34:3 – 36:21

OUTLINE

Events before Jerusalem falls	1-38	
Events after Jerusalem falls	39-45	
Facts about Gentile nations	46-51	Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, Babylon
Historical supplement	52	To prove that what Jeremiah said, did happen; therefore he was a true prophet.

HISTORICAL SETTING IN JUDAH

Jeremiah writes during a time of international conflict and change between Assyria, Egypt and Babylon.

He gives God's message to the last 5 kings of Judah when they are caught between these nations.

He begins his ministry 3 years before Habakkuk; he ends his ministry 25 years after Habakkuk.

Josiah 640-609 BC

Politically: 30 years of relative peace; Assyria declines and Babylon defeats Nineveh in 612 BC.

Egypt gains power. Her army kills Josiah as he tries to stop them on their way north in 609 BC.

Josiah's son #1 is named king after his death. He is pro-Babylon.

Spiritually: Josiah rules as king when he is 20; he is totally committed to God; he and the believing remnant *want* to follow God.

He leads the nation in reform, but the majority only follow God because they *have* to.

Attendance at temple services and holy days is higher than ever, but they worship their idols in private.

Their return is pretense. 3:10

They refuse to listen; they refuse to obey; they change or reject God's Word. 5:30-31; 6:10; 6:13-16, 19; 8:8-9

When God's people do not want to obey, God does not want their worship

Jehoiakim 609-597 BC - Josiah's son #2; Egypt names him to be king in 609. He is pro-Egyptian.

Politically: Josiah's son #1, who was king, is taken prisoner to Egypt where he later dies.

In 605 BC Babylon takes control of the area; Jehoiakim then decides to be pro-Babylon so he can still be king.

Members of the royal family are taken to serve in Babylon's government – includes Daniel and his 3 friends.

After 3 years, Jehoiakim rebels against Babylon. The Babylonian army returns 5 years later in 597 BC.

Spiritually: The *people* fast and listen to God's message because of their fear of Babylon and king Nebuchadnezzar.

But when Judah's *king* hears God's message, he cuts the scroll in pieces and burns it. 36:21-26

He would rather get rid of God's word than have to obey it; all the leaders have lost their fear of God.

God says He will let Judah be destroyed and go into exile in Babylon for 70 yrs. 25:8-11

Jehoiachin 3 months – son of Jehoiakim

Politically: Jeremiah tells the king it will go well for them if he and his family surrender to Babylon.

They surrender and are taken to Babylon where he is put in prison and treated well.

10,000 Jewish craftsmen and middle class people are exiled to Babylon; Ezekiel is part of this group.

Zedekiah 597-586 BC – Josiah's son #3

Spiritually: He and the people would rather kill God's prophet than listen to God's words. 37:2; 38:4

When Jeremiah sees God's message is knowingly rejected, he stops giving it to them.

He then works only with the believing remnant who want to hear God's message.

He writes the exiles in Babylon to encourage them. The exile will last 70 years; then they can return. chpt. 29

The exiles will use this letter for the next 60 years. Daniel will use it in his later years.

HISTORICAL SETTING IN JUDAH

Zedekiah continued

Politically: He agrees to be pro-Babylon, but 9 years later becomes pro-Egyptian.

Babylon comes again in 588 BC; she besieges Jerusalem for 2 yrs.; breaks down the walls; burns the city and temple.

The king is blinded and taken as prisoner to Babylon.

All the people are exiled to Babylon; only the indigent Jews are allowed to stay in Jerusalem.

Gedaliah

He is made leader of the Jews by Babylon, but is assassinated after 2 months by Jews from east of the Jordan River.

Jewish leaders force the remaining Jews to flee to Egypt for protection; they take Jeremiah with them.

In **Egypt**

The Jews reject God and turn to the pagan gods they had worshipped in Judah. 44:15-18

EXPLANATIONS

God's Fairness

- *What God did: I spoke again and again; persistently; rising up early* 11 times in book
- *What Judah did: You left Me; you denied, you forgot Me; you rebelled against Me; you do not receive My words; you will not obey/hear Me* 76 times in book

God's Judgment 3 deportations to Babylon

1st - 605 BC

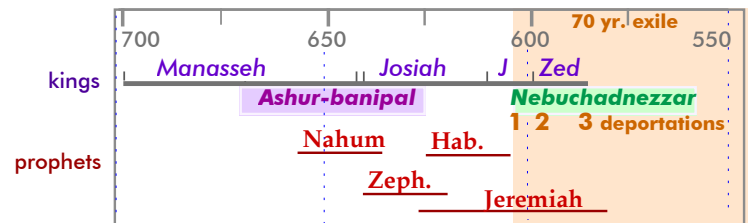
Daniel, 3 friends, other royal family taken

2nd - 597 BC

Ezekiel plus 10,000 middle class

3rd - 586 BC

Remainder of the Jews



DEFINITIONS

1:6 *I am a **child** means I am not qualified to begin training or service.*

44:19 **Queen of Heaven** refers to the pagan goddess of fertility. It started in Babylon with the goddess Ishtar.

Each nation gave her a new name when they developed their own religion - Astarte, Isis, Aphrodite, Venus

People worshipped her with incense and food so she would give them more crops, animals or children.

APPLICATION: There comes a time when nothing can stop God's judgment on a nation.

God makes this clear to Jeremiah in chapters 7:16 and 15:1.

This was true of nations, Jew and Gentile, in the 500's BC and is still true for nations in the 2000's AD.

God shows mercy and gives nations years and years of opportunity, blessing and warning.

But deliberate, continued rejection requires God's judgment on a **nation**.

However, there is always mercy for **individuals** within the nation, who are seeking Him and following Him.

It is why the prayer for our nation has to be,

Lord, in Your judgment on our nation, remember to show mercy to individuals.

It is easy to look at **nations** when they do not listen or obey, but God wants us to look at our **lives**.

Are **we** obedient and listening?

It is easy to focus on the chaos, evil and insecurity and then let ourselves get anxious.

God wants us to focus on His character - His justice **has** to be balanced with His mercy.

This is why there are so many crisis and why He lets it continue. It is justice sending judgment.

God wants us to focus on what He has done in our lives in the past

This opens our eyes to see and appreciate what He doing for us in the present.

It brings praise and thankfulness to have the *ah-ha* moment – He **is** God and therefore **is** in control.

It brings calmness, stability and wisdom so we make wise decisions.

We think, the worse things get, the more we have to **talk** our faith. God is showing us, the worse things get, the more we have to **live** our faith. These steps will develop and deepen our faith. Then, those who are searching will see the difference God makes in our life and will want to know more. It is then we can give them the good news.

Before we can effectively share our faith, we must learn to live our faith.

