

Jeremiah Begins His Prophetic Ministry to Judah (629t BC)

Jeremiah 1

Superscription

- 1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that *were* in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:
- 2 To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.
- 3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

Jeremiah's Call and Commission

- 4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
- 5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.
- 6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child.
- 7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.
- 8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.
- 9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.
- 10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Vision of the Branch of an Almond Tree

- 11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.
- 12 Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

Vision of a Boiling Pot

- 13 And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof *is* toward the north.
- 14 Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.
- 15 For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.
- 16 And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

A Divine Challenge and Promise

- 17 Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.
- 18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defensed city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.
- 19 And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—God's Case Against Israel (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 2

God's Fond Memories of Israel's Youth

- 1 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
- 2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land *that was* not sown.
- 3 Israel *was* holiness unto the LORD, *and* the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

Israel's Current Apostasy

- 4 Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:
- 5 Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?
- 6 Neither said they, Where *is* the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?
- 7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.
- 8 The priests said not, Where *is* the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and

the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after *things that* do not profit.

9 Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

11 Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit.

12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

The Consequences of Israel's Apostasy

14 *Is* Israel a servant? *is* he a homeborn *slave*? why is he spoiled?

15 The young lions roared upon him, *and* yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

16 Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

17 Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?

18 And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear *is* not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

The Strange Fascination With and Futility of Idolatry

20 For of old time I have broken thy yoke, *and* burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

21 Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

22 For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, *yet* thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.

23 How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: *thou art* a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

24 A wild ass used to the wilderness, *that* snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

25 Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,

27 Saying to a stock, Thou *art* my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned *their* back unto me, and not *their* face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

28 But where *are* thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for *according to* the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

Israel Deserves Judgment

29 Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.

30 In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

31 O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, *or* a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

33 Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.

34 Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

35 Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.

36 Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.

37 Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—An Appeal to Return to God (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 3:1–4:4

A Faithless Wife

3:1 They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? [cf. [Deut 24:1–4](#)] but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

2 Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the

Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

3 Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

4 Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou *art* the guide of my youth?

5 Will he reserve *his anger* for ever? will he keep *it* to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

Judah More Guilty Than Israel

6 The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen *that* which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

7 And I said after she had done all these *things*, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*.

8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.

11 And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

A Call for Repentance

12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; *and* I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I *am* merciful, saith the LORD, *and* I will not keep *anger* for ever.

13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.

14a Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you:

Millennial Blessings

14b and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit *it*; neither shall *that* be done any more.

17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

18 In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

God Describes the True Repentance He Desires

19 But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

20 Surely *as* a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.

21 A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping *and* supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, *and* they have forgotten the LORD their God.

22 Return, ye backsliding children, *and* I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou *art* the LORD our God.

23 Truly in vain *is salvation hoped for* from the hills, *and from* the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God *is* the salvation of Israel.

24 For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.

25 We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

4:1 If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

2 And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

3 For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

Chronological Notes

1) Jeremiah.

A) Josiah's 13th Year.

- (1) In Jeremiah 25:3, the prophet counted 23 years from the 13th year of Josiah to the 4th year of Jehoiakim, 606t. The cardinal number 23 is given without any preposition or modifier and must be taken in an absolute (accession) sense; this puts the 13th year of Josiah in 606t + 23 = 629t. By Jeremiah's non-accession reckoning, Josiah's beginning year can be calculated as 629t + 12 (acc.) = 641t. This date for the accession of Josiah provides the means of determining if the 31 years for his reign given in 2 Kings 22:1 is an accession or non-accession figure. The Babylonian Chronicles allow the date of his death to be calculated as the fourth month of 609 BC, which was in the year 610t. This was 31 years after the beginning of Josiah's reign in 641t, so the reign length as given in 2 Kings 22:1 is by accession reckoning, showing, incidentally, that somewhere between 2 Kings 22:1 and 24:1 the counting system changed from accession to non-accession (*Important: Josiah's 13th year in Jer 1:2 = Josiah's 12th year in 2 Chr 34:3).¹

B) Chronological Arrangement of Jeremiah.

- (1) Jeremiah's ministry spanned the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah and the governorship of Gedaliah (cf. Jer 1:1–3; 40:7). The book of Jeremiah contains many chronological references which date the various events and prophecies:

- Jeremiah 1:1–3 — the 13th year of Josiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 3:6 — during Josiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 21:1 — during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem in Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 22:10–13 — just after Josiah's death, Jehoahaz's (Shallum's) exile and Jehoiakim's accession.
- Jeremiah 24:1 — after Nebuchadnezzar deported Jehoiachin to Babylon.
- Jeremiah 25:1 — the 4th year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 25:3 — marks 23 years of ministry between Josiah's 13th year and Jehoiakim's 4th year.
- Jeremiah 26:1 — the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 27:1 — early in Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 28:1 — the 5th month of the 4th year of Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 29:1–2 — after Nebuchadnezzar deported Jehoiachin to Babylon.
- Jeremiah 32:1 — the 10th year of Zedekiah's reign (Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year).
- Jeremiah 32:2, 8 — when Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guardhouse during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 33:1 — when Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guardhouse during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 34:1–10 — during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 36:1–8 — the 4th year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 36:9–32 — the 9th month of the 5th year of Jehoiakim's reign
- Jeremiah 37:1–5 — the brief respite in Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 37:21 — Jeremiah is committed to the courtyard of the guardhouse during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 39:1 — the 10th month of the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 39:15 — when Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guardhouse during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 41:1 — the 7th month of 587.
- Jeremiah 45:1 — the 4th year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 46:1 — the 4th year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 47:1 — before Pharaoh attacked Gaza.
- Jeremiah 49:34 — early in the reign of Zedekiah.
- Jeremiah 51:59 — the 4th year of Zedekiah's reign.

- (2) The chronological data above makes it clear that the canonical order of Jeremiah does not follow the historical order. This has given rise to various attempts to organize Jeremiah chronologically.² For the most part, I will be following the arrangement of J. Barton Payne.

¹ Rodger C. Young, "When Did Jerusalem Fall?" *JETS* 47.1 (Mar 2004): 35.

² Charles H. Dyer, "Jeremiah," *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, chart on p. 1126; J. Barton Payne, "The Arrangement of Jeremiah's Prophecies," *JETS* 7.4 (Fall 1964), chart on p. 125; Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah," *EBC*, Vol. 6, 358.