

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

Jeremiah 1

Superscription

- 1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who 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, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the exile of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Jeremiah's Call and Commission

- 4 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,
- 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
 And before you were born I consecrated you;
 I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."
- 6 Then I said, "Alas, Lord GOD!
 Behold, I do not know how to speak,
 Because I am a youth."
- 7 But the LORD said to me,
 "Do not say, 'I am a youth,'
 Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,
 And all that I command you, you shall speak.
- 8 "Do not be afraid of them,
 For I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD.
- 9 Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me,
- "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.
- 10 "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms,
 To pluck up and to break down,
 To destroy and to overthrow,
 To build and to plant."

Vision of the Branch of an Almond Tree

- 11 The word of the LORD came to me saying, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree."
 12 Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it."

Vision of a Boiling Pot

- 13 The word of the LORD came to me a second time saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north."
 14 Then the LORD said to me, "Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land.
 15 "For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north," declares the LORD; "and they will come and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about and against all the cities of Judah.
 16 "I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.

A Divine Challenge and Promise

- 17 "Now, gird up your loins and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them.
 18 "Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests and to the people of the land.
 19 "They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD.

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

Jeremiah 2

God's Fond Memories of Israel's Youth

- 1 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,
 2 "Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD,

“I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth,
The love of your betrothals,
Your following after Me in the wilderness,
Through a land not sown.

- 3 “Israel was holy to the LORD,
The first of His harvest.
All who ate of it became guilty;
Evil came upon them,” declares the LORD.”

Israel’s Current Apostasy

4 Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.

5 Thus says the LORD,

“What injustice did your fathers find in Me,
That they went far from Me
And walked after emptiness and became empty?

- 6 “They did not say, ‘Where is the LORD
Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
Who led us through the wilderness,
Through a land of deserts and of pits,
Through a land of drought and of deep darkness,
Through a land that no one crossed
And where no man dwelt?’
7 “I brought you into the fruitful land
To eat its fruit and its good things.
But you came and defiled My land,
And My inheritance you made an abomination.
8 “The priests did not say, ‘Where is the LORD?’
And those who handle the law did not know Me;
The rulers also transgressed against Me,
And the prophets prophesied by Baal
And walked after things that did not profit.
9 “Therefore I will yet contend with you,” declares the LORD,
“And with your sons’ sons I will contend.
10 “For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see,
And send to Kedar and observe closely
And see if there has been such *a thing* as this!
11 “Has a nation changed gods
When they were not gods?
But My people have changed their glory
For that which does not profit.
12 “Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
And shudder, be very desolate,” declares the LORD.
13 “For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me,
The fountain of living waters,
To hew for themselves cisterns,
Broken cisterns
That can hold no water.

The Consequences of Israel’s Apostasy

- 14 “Is Israel a slave?
Or is he a homeborn servant?
Why has he become a prey?
15 “The young lions have roared at him,
They have roared loudly.
And they have made his land a waste;

- His cities have been destroyed, without inhabitant.
- 16 “Also the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes
Have shaved the crown of your head.
- 17 “Have you not done this to yourself
By your forsaking the LORD your God
When He led you in the way?
- 18 “But now what are you doing on the road to Egypt,
To drink the waters of the Nile?
Or what are you doing on the road to Assyria,
To drink the waters of the Euphrates?
- 19 “Your own wickedness will correct you,
And your apostasies will reprove you;
Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter
For you to forsake the LORD your God,
And the dread of Me is not in you,” declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

The Strange Fascination With and Futility of Idolatry

- 20 “For long ago I broke your yoke
And tore off your bonds;
But you said, ‘I will not serve!’
For on every high hill
And under every green tree
You have lain down as a harlot.
- 21 “Yet I planted you a choice vine,
A completely faithful seed.
How then have you turned yourself before Me
Into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?
- 22 “Although you wash yourself with lye
And use much soap,
The stain of your iniquity is before Me,” declares the Lord GOD.
- 23 “How can you say, ‘I am not defiled,
I have not gone after the Baals’?
Look at your way in the valley!
Know what you have done!
You are a swift young camel entangling her ways,
- 24 A wild donkey accustomed to the wilderness,
That sniffs the wind in her passion.
In *the time of* her heat who can turn her away?
All who seek her will not become weary;
In her month they will find her.
- 25 “Keep your feet from being unshod
And your throat from thirst;
But you said, ‘It is hopeless!
No! For I have loved strangers,
And after them I will walk.’
- 26 “As the thief is shamed when he is discovered,
So the house of Israel is shamed;
They, their kings, their princes
And their priests and their prophets,
- 27 Who say to a tree, ‘You are my father,’
And to a stone, ‘You gave me birth.’
For they have turned *their* back to Me,
And not *their* face;
But in the time of their trouble they will say,
‘Arise and save us.’
- 28 “But where are your gods
Which you made for yourself?
Let them arise, if they can save you

In the time of your trouble;
For *according to* the number of your cities
Are your gods, O Judah.

Israel Deserves Judgment

- 29 “Why do you contend with Me?
You have all transgressed against Me,” declares the LORD.
- 30 “In vain I have struck your sons;
They accepted no chastening.
Your sword has devoured your prophets
Like a destroying lion.
- 31 “O generation, heed the word of the LORD.
Have I been a wilderness to Israel,
Or a land of thick darkness?
Why do My people say, ‘We are free to roam;
We will no longer come to You’?
- 32 “Can a virgin forget her ornaments,
Or a bride her attire?
Yet My people have forgotten Me
Days without number.
- 33 “How well you prepare your way
To seek love!
Therefore even the wicked women
You have taught your ways.
- 34 “Also on your skirts is found
The lifeblood of the innocent poor;
You did not find them breaking in.
But in spite of all these things,
Yet you said, ‘I am innocent;
Surely His anger is turned away from me.’
Behold, I will enter into judgment with you
Because you say, ‘I have not sinned.’
- 36 “Why do you go around so much
Changing your way?
Also, you will be put to shame by Egypt
As you were put to shame by Assyria.
- 37 “From this *place* also you will go out
With your hands on your head;
For the LORD has rejected those in whom you trust,
And you will not prosper with 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 *God* says, “If a husband divorces his wife
And she goes from him
And belongs to another man,
Will he still return to her?
Will not that land be completely polluted? [cf. [Deut 24:1–4](#)]
But you are a harlot *with* many lovers;
Yet you turn to Me,” declares the LORD.
- 2 “Lift up your eyes to the bare heights and see;
Where have you not been violated?
By the roads you have sat for them
Like an Arab in the desert,
And you have polluted a land
With your harlotry and with your wickedness.

- 3 “Therefore the showers have been withheld,
And there has been no spring rain.
Yet you had a harlot’s forehead;
You refused to be ashamed.
- 4 “Have you not just now called to Me,
‘My Father, You are the friend of my youth?’
- 5 ‘Will He be angry forever?
Will He be indignant to the end?’
Behold, you have spoken
And have done evil things,
And you have had your way.”

Judah More Guilty Than Israel

- 6 Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, “Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.
- 7 “I thought, ‘After she has done all these things she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.
- 8 “And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.
- 9 “Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.
- 10 “Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,” declares the LORD.
- 11 And the LORD said to me, “Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

A Call for Repentance

- 12 “Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say,
- ‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares the LORD;
‘I will not look upon you in anger.
For I am gracious,’ declares the LORD;
‘I will not be angry forever.
- 13 ‘Only acknowledge your iniquity,
That you have transgressed against the LORD your God
And have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree,
And you have not obeyed My voice,’ declares the LORD.
- 14a ‘Return, O faithless sons,’ declares the LORD;
‘For I am a master to you,

Millennial Blessings

- 14b And I will take you one from a city and two from a family,
And I will bring you to Zion.’
- 15 “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.
- 16 “It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares the LORD, “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again.
- 17 “At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the LORD,’ and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.
- 18 “In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.

God Describes the True Repentance He Desires

- 19 “Then I said,
- ‘How I would set you among My sons
And give you a pleasant land,
The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!’
And I said, ‘You shall call Me, My Father,
And not turn away from following Me.’

- 20 “Surely, as a woman treacherously departs from her lover,
So you have dealt treacherously with Me,
O house of Israel,” declares the LORD.
- 21 A voice is heard on the bare heights,
The weeping *and* the supplications of the sons of Israel;
Because they have perverted their way,
They have forgotten the LORD their God.
- 22 “Return, O faithless sons,
I will heal your faithlessness.”
“Behold, we come to You;
For You are the LORD our God.
- 23 “Surely, the hills are a deception,
A tumult *on* the mountains.
Surely in the LORD our God
Is the salvation of Israel.
- 24 “But the shameful thing has consumed the labor of our fathers since our youth, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.
- 25 “Let us lie down in our shame, and let our humiliation cover us; for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day. And we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”
- 4:1 “If you will return, O Israel,” declares the LORD,
“Then you should return to Me.
And if you will put away your detested things from My presence,
And will not waver,
- 2 And you will swear, ‘As the LORD lives,’
In truth, in justice and in righteousness;
Then the nations will bless themselves in Him,
And in Him they will glory.”
- 3 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem,
- “Break up your fallow ground,
And do not sow among thorns.
- 4 “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD
And remove the foreskins of your heart,
Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Or else My wrath will go forth like fire
And burn with none to quench it,
Because of the evil of your deeds.”

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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.