

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH #2

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“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. (20:9) But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. (31:31) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Jer. 18:6; 20:9; 31:31-34.

We return to our introduction into the book of Jeremiah. We saw last week that Jeremiah is the author of this book and we gave both internal and external evidence for this. We would like to secondly look at:

II. The Life, Call and Ministry of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, Jer. 1:1, *“The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiyah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin.”* Anathoth was 2 – 3 miles northeast of Jerusalem. His father was Hilkiyah a priest. Jeremiah received his calling to the prophetic office probably around age 20 or so in the 13th year of Josiah’s reign. His ministry was about 40 years long around 626 to 586 BC. He ministered to the last 5 kings of Judah whereof only one of them was a good king which was Josiah.

- Josiah 639/640 – 609 BC
- Jehoahaz 609 BC
- Jehoiakim 608 – 598 BC
- Jehoiachin 598 – 597 BC
- Zedekiah 597 – 586 BC

Jeremiah prophesied and ministered during the reign of 5 kings, though he did live through the reign of 7. Before the reign of Josiah, there was Manasseh 697-642 BC and Amon 642-640 BC. Jeremiah was born during the reign of Manasseh, but his calling didn’t come until about 626 BC in the 13th year of Josiah’s reign, Josiah was Manasseh grandson. Thus, he served as a prophet throughout the remaining years of Josiah’s reign who was Judah’s last good king. Jeremiah continued until the last ruler of Judah Zedekiah.

The following is copied:

<u>Dates Kings of Judah Major Events</u> 640-609 B.C.	Josiah	Godly	Call of Jeremiah (626 B.C.); Fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.); Reformation. Death of Josiah at Megiddo
609 B.C. (3 mos)	Jehoahaz	Wicked	
608-598 B.C. (11 yrs)	Jehoiachim	Wicked	Battle of Carchemish and Fall of the Assyrian Empire (605 B.C.); 1 st siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (605 B.C.); 1 st deportation of exiles to Babylon (605 B.C.)
598-597 B.C. (3 mos)	Jehoiachin (Jeconiah)	Wicked	
597-586 B.C. (11 yrs)	Zedekiah	Wicked	2 nd and 3 rd deportations (597 B.C., 586 B.C.)
586 B.C.		Fall of Jerusalem; assassination of Gedaliah (governer)	

We are told that there is more known about Jeremiah than any other prophet in the Scriptures. Most of the prophecy no doubt is given over to the biographical information on the prophet which helps us to know something of this prophet and better yet to know something of the God of the prophet. As you read the book of Jeremiah you realize that for 40 years Jeremiah was the lone voice of God to the nation of Judah. He pleaded with great passion, preaching with fervency and tears for the people to repent and turn to God or else facing awful doom and judgment. The sad thing was in spite of his godly and holy efforts: NO ONE LISTENED!

- Jeremiah 6:16 & 17, *“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, **We will not walk therein.** 17 Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. **But they said, We will not hearken.**”*

- Jeremiah 7:23-26, “But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. 24 But **they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.** 25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: 26 **Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.**”
- Jeremiah 8:1-5 “At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: 2 And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. 3 **And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family,** which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts. 4 Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? 5 **Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.**”
- Jeremiah 9:13, “And the LORD saith, Because **they have forsaken my law** which I set before them, and **have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;** 14 **But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim,** which their fathers taught them.”
- Jeremiah 11:6, “Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. 7 For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. 8 **Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart:** therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; **but they did them not.**”
- Jeremiah 16:10 & 11, “And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God? 11 Then shalt thou say unto them, Because **your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law.**”
- Jeremiah 32:26 – 35, “**Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah,** saying, Behold, I am the

LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? 28 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: 29 And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30 **For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD.** 31 **For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face.** 32 **Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger,** they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 And **they have turned unto me the back, and not the face:** though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, **yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.** 34 But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. 35 And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.”

- Jeremiah 36:31, “*And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; **but they hearkened not.**”*
- Jeremiah 44:1-5, “**The word that came to Jeremiah** concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein, 3 Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers. 4 Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. 44:5 **But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.**”
- Jeremiah 44:10, “*They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, **nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you** and before your fathers.”*

How sad, Jeremiah preached 40 years and many of times the same message of repentance, but the harden heart of the people would not hear but walk in counsel and ways of their own hearts, sounds much like the modern church and America, God help us!

So finally after 40 years of preaching to no avail and only 1 convert Jeremiah witnessed the total destruction of his nation and sadder still was the fact that that his ministry ended by his being taken captive and forcefully exiled to Egypt, chapter 43.

One of the reasons I just love this prophet is because in spite of all his continual hardships and seeming failures, mass disappointments, the prophet Jeremiah preached faithfully the Word of God. He remained steadfast to the end, what a resolute and unshakable example to the ministers of God.

Besides the rebellious actions and the unrepentant and non-responding people Jeremiah was also opposed the whole time of his ministry and life and sadder still is the fact that:

- His own family rejected him. Jer.12:6 & 7, *“For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee. 7 I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.”*
- False prophets and priests were also against him, Jer.12:10-12, *“Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. 11 They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. 12 The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.”* Jer.20:1 & 2, *“Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. 2 Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.”* Jer. 23.
- His own neighbors rejected him also Jer.11:19-21, *“But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered. 20 But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause. 21 Therefore thus saith the LORD of **the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life**, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand.”*
- The people that knew him, his friends: Jer.20:10, *“For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.”*
- His general audience: Jer.26:8, *“Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.”*
- The kings of Judah would not give him ear.
- He was imprisoned, impoverished and was also thrown into a cistern, his life was threatened more than once. Some of his writings were destroyed.
- After 40 years of preaching he was finally taken captive and exiled to Egypt in

Jer.43.

It was under all these circumstances that Jeremiah preached faithfully to the end. He continued amidst all these failures, discouragements, disappointments and defeats and through it all he was dedicated and committed to the God of his salvation! His whole life is an object lesson and example for the ministers of God as well as for all Christians. He reminds me of Paul in a certain sense. As a matter of fact he was forbidden to marry and have children because of the impending doom on judgment on Judah. Look at Jeremiah 16:1-13, *“The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying, 2 Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place. 3 For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; 4 They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 5 For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even lovingkindness and mercies. 6 Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them: 7 Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother. 8 Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink. 9 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride. 10 And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God? 11 Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; 12 And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me: 13 Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour.”*

I hope that you can see why Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. He had few friends and had only 1 convert in 40 years and thus he wrote many times describing the anguish of his heart.

- Jer.4:19 *“My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.”*
- Jer.9:1 *“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”*
- Jer.10:19, *“Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it.”*
- Jer.11:18 & 19, *“And the LORD hath given me knowledge of it, and I know it: then thou shewedst me their doings. 19 But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I*

knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.”

- Jer. 15:10-21 (read)
- Jer.18:18-23, *“Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words. 19 Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. 20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. 21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle. 22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet. 23 Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thus with them in the time of thine anger.”*
- Jer.20:14-18, *“Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. 15 Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. 16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide; 17 Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. 18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?”*
- Jer.23:9, *“Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.”*

These and other verses show the brokenness of his heart and thus rightly called the weeping prophet, but in the midst of all these struggle’s God assured him. We have seen this already in chapter 1. Jer.6:27, *“I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.”* Jer.15:19 & 20, *“And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 21 And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.”* This served as a means of great strength and encouragement for Jeremiah. He was a man who believed and fully trusted the God of his salvation over the multiplicities of circumstances that were against him. He would faithfully proclaim God’s message in the midst of constant unbelief, persecution and attacks. No doubt that his message is necessary for our day as it was in his day. What a special prophet of God in spite of all his inward and outward struggles, he maintained a faithful and obedient service to God, a very special Old Testament prophet. His life, call and ministry was a roller coaster ride, but steadfast, unwavering and fully committed.

III. The Date

The date of his writing is 626 to 586 BC. As we saw earlier Jeremiah began his ministry in the 13 year of King Josiah's reign which would be right around 626 or 627 BC.

As a side note, I want to look at King Josiah in my introduction, because he was the last good king they would have. The godliness of this man Josiah is something to be studied and emulated. He had a heart for God and for righteousness. What amazes me is the fact that he was only 8 years old when he began to reign and he reigned for 31 years! Turn to 2 Kings 22:1 & 2. Let's now look at the similar verses in 2 Chron.34:1-7. Wow to have so much wisdom and a godly appetite at such a young age speaks volumes. He had a godly life and a godly reign. He followed the example of David and never strayed or digressed from such a holy life. Josiah's major concern was over the affairs of the house of God that is; in the restoration of the temple and especially in the restoration of the true worship of the Living and True God. They assigned some sort of fund raising to fix and repair the temple and money was given to those who would do the work. Look at verse 8 – 13 and see the love and concern and how they cared for the house of God.

Notice what ensued in verses 14-28 and behold at what happened during construction and repairs; they found GOD'S WORD, the LAW of MOSES! (Read verses). They tell the king what they found and notice his reaction to this. Look also in 2 Kings 22:16-20. Back to 2 Chron.34:29-33. (Also 2 Kings 23:1-30) Oh to God that we had such a godly man and leader like King Josiah. How was this so? How was it that he became such a lover of God and God's Word? What made the difference? A godly upbringing by his mother! His mother was Jedidah who no doubt was a godly woman herself and she had a strong spiritual influence upon this young man, for he lived a righteous life before the Lord, did you notice what is said in 2 Kings 22:2, *"And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."* He followed the godly example of King David and never wavered aside to the right or to the left, but kept walking in THE WAY of God in that NARROW but godly way as he never deviating from God. Oh parents please remember that your actions, not so much your words, but your actions will have an influence upon your children. I mean when you really think about it, he was a king at age 8. Age 8 is an age that is easily influenced and he heard the voice of many and could have been easily persuaded in such a tender age, but his heart was in the GOD of his salvation! Sad but true, he would be the last godly King of Judah. We'll continue in our introduction in two weeks.