

**INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH
(PART #2)**

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QUESTION #2 – Who was Jeremiah?

We are going to work carefully through his introduction in verses 1-3 next week, and we will continually get to know him as we go through the book he wrote. But for now we will introduce you to and highlight fourteen facts about Jeremiah and his life.

Fact #1 - Jeremiah was a prophet. **(1:5)**

His job was to accurately communicate the word of God and not deviate from it. As a prophet he had two primary responsibilities:

(Responsibility #1) - Forth tell the truth of God;

(Responsibility #2) - Fore tell the Future of God.

Now a prophet received direct revelatory messages from God that enabled him to carry out his prophetic ministry. In other words, God would specifically reveal His word and truth to a prophet and it was his job to communicate it.

There are no prophets today and this gift of prophesy is not operative now. As the Apostle Paul said to the church, the gifts pertaining to prophesy shall be “done away” (I Corinthians 13:8). We have the prophetic word in print and our job is to accurately communicate it and teach it.

Jeremiah was a prophet who did get direct messages from God that had to do with God’s truth and God’s future.

Fact #2 - Jeremiah was a man of prayer.

There were many times in the life of Jeremiah when God was the only Person to whom He could talk. He was such a man of prayer that there were many times when God had to actually tell him to stop praying (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11).

As we will see, Jeremiah talked to God about everything and anything. In fact, he prayed that God would pour out His vengeance on those who were plotting against him and God answered the prayer (Jer. 11:20, 21).

Fact #3 - Jeremiah is the only prophet specifically appointed to the nations. **1:5, 10**

Many prophets had messages they presented to the nations in regard to Israel. Daniel certainly did and so did Isaiah and Ezekiel. **But Jeremiah is specifically singled out to be a prophet to the nations.**

There are people who think we should never get involved in politics or in the political world. We should never use illustrations from the political world and never point out evils in the political world. These people will not like Jeremiah. They are either ignorant of the word of God or they are arrogant in their defiance of it. But Jeremiah becomes very political.

In Jeremiah 46-51, he will take direct messages to many nations: He will speak out against Egypt, Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Arab tribes, Elam, Babylon. He will specifically target cities and he will name individuals.

He told Israel and the nations to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, whom he calls God's servant – Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10. That message did not make him popular with anyone.

Jeremiah's prophetic message is certainly for Israel, but it is also for the nations. All need to hear what this prophet has to say.

Fact #4 - Jeremiah came from the city of Anathoth. **1:1**

This was a city two located 2-3 miles NE of Jerusalem. It was a priestly town that was given by Joshua to the decedents of Aaron (Josh. 21:18-19). So Jeremiah lived in a town filled with priests.

The priests did not like Jeremiah. He wasn't one of them. They did not like the fact that he was preaching things that made them look bad because they were bad. In fact, the priests of the city wanted to kill Jeremiah (11:21).

It is quite obvious that the priests were not having a major impact on the spirituality of the people because the people were heading to disaster. You can live in a very religious city filled with all kinds of religious people and not be right with God.

Fact #5 - Jeremiah's father's name was Hilkiah. **1:1**

Hilkiah was a priest (Neh. 8:4) who was a member of the Levitical priesthood. **So Jeremiah came from a priestly family, in a priestly city, but he himself did not become a priest.** Jeremiah was a priest's son, but he did not follow in the family tradition.

In fact, the interesting thing is the priesthood was not accomplishing much because Judah fell into terrible sin and it needed a prophet, who knew the word of God to call her out of it.

Religious leaders don't get people to turn from sin, the word of God does and it needs men who can communicate the word of God to the people and Jeremiah was one such man.

Fact #6 - Jeremiah was not married. **16:1-4**

Now Jeremiah was not married because he didn't like girls; he was not married because God told him not to marry. God said to Jeremiah that he was not to marry and have children because He was going to kill everyone in the land and if he married and he had children, he would see all of them dead. In fact, God would send deadly diseases to kill people (v. 4).

Fact #7 - Jeremiah believed in the sovereign irresistible will of God in his own life. **1:10**

Jeremiah knew that this ministry was because of the sovereign will of God. He was not looking to be a prophet.

One of the things that enabled Jeremiah to carry out his ministry was his clear grasp and understanding of the sovereignty of God. It was not an abstract concept of theology to Jeremiah; it was a precious doctrine that kept him going.

He believed God sovereignly ordained his life and his ministry and caused him to speak, even when he did not feel like speaking (20:9). Jeremiah believed completely in the sovereignty of God.

Fact #8 - Jeremiah spoke against false religious teachers and called them liars and told people they needed to listen to him because he communicated the word of God. **27:8-11**

Jeremiah was not a quiet man who kept his mouth shut in the face of false religion. He confronted religious leaders and politicians with the truth of God. He told people don't listen to those liars, but listen to God's word.

We are losing the sense of this in this politically correct world of ours. Paul said if someone preaches another gospel other than the pure grace of God, they are to be accursed. They are not to be appreciated or coddled, but accursed.

That is exactly what Jeremiah did. He spotted them and pointed them out.

Fact #9 - God and Jeremiah both use the word "perhaps" to emphasize human responsibility to listen to the word of God and respond to it. **26:3; 36:3 (i.e. Luke 20:13)**

Even though Jeremiah had a tremendous view of God's sovereignty, he was never presumptuous about it even as a prophet of God. He did not always know the will of God and at times used the word "perhaps" (Jer. 36:7).

If God's people decide to respond to God's word and apply it, God can and "perhaps" may turn things completely around for them. But one does not want to become dogmatic about this point (Jer. 21:2).

Name it and claim it ministers do not have a right view of God or themselves.

Fact #10 - Jeremiah stopped going to funerals and weddings because God did not want his presence giving any hint that He was pleased with His people. **16:5-9**

Jeremiah was a prophet of God and God did not want him to be present at either one of these public events because He did not want to signal any hope of His blessings in regard to anything. He did not want people thinking His presence was in any way with them or for them. In fact, He was going to ferociously judge them.

Fact #11 - Jeremiah was so lonely and harassed that he lamented the fact he was born. **20:14-18**

In fact, Jeremiah is often called the “prophet of loneliness” because of all of the lonely assignments God gave him. Jeremiah actually complained about the fact that God let people laugh at him and mock him and threaten him. He reached a place where he questioned his very life. He did not know why God let him be born and didn’t kill him at birth.

Fact #12 - Jeremiah’s ministry was not ever a joyous one. 9:1; 13:17

Jeremiah’s ministry was so totally depressing and lonely that he would often cry. Rabbis have called him “the weeping prophet.” His entire ministry was one of “high anxiety.” When you read his autobiographical remarks (10:23-25; 11:18-12:6; 15:10-14, 15-21; 17:9-11, 14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-13,14-18), it is clear that his life was a sad life and he was a man who often talked to God. There were times when God was the only one he could talk to about things. He suffered more negatives than any other prophet. Jeremiah is a prophet who shares his own feelings as he ministered.

Now most ministries have ups and downs. But usually there is a break in the action and the sun shines again after it has been dark. It didn’t work that way so much for Jeremiah.

His ministry was one nightmare after another. His tragic ministry lasted over 40 years and he would actually live to see Jerusalem destroyed and then go down to Egypt and be killed.

Fact #13 - Jeremiah was in his ministry for over 40 years and he lived through five different kings of Judah who were mostly evil and corrupt.

The duration of Jeremiah’s prophetic work is from Josiah (Jer. 1:2) to Zedekiah (Jer. 1:3).

(King #1) - Josiah (640-609 BC) - good king brought reform/revival; prosperity and peace (1-6).

(King #2) - Jehoahaz (three months in 609 BC) - wicked king removed by Egyptian Neco (22:10-12).

(King #3) - Jehoiakim (609-598 BC) - evil king. Reversed all Josiah’s godly practices and he hated Jeremiah and made his life miserable. He cut up Scriptures and burned them (Jer. 36:23).

(King #4) - Jehoiachin (three months 598-597 BC) - listened to Jeremiah and surrendered to Babylon (22-23).

(King #5) - Zedekiah (597 BC) - weak, compromising weasel with no guts. Jeremiah would tell him word of God and he would waffle between that and doing the will of the people. He was a typical weasel of a politician (21-24; 27-34; 37-39).

Jeremiah is a great book for God's people to go through when their nation is being governed by political imbeciles and crazies.

We can relate to this. We have lived through many political and religious leaders and the vast majority of them have not been those who feared God and His word and were interested in obeying it. Right now we have leaders in Washington who are out of their minds. We need to keep our focus on the word of God and will of God like Jeremiah did.

Fact #14 - Jeremiah lived at a time when Israel was being threatened by three main foreign powers.

Jeremiah lived at a time when Israel was being shoved around and threatened by three main powers. It was a scary time to be the people of God.

Israel was being threatened by Assyria to the north, Egypt in the south and Babylon in the east. Babylon was the most ferocious of all. Babylon is named 162 times in the book of Jeremiah.

It is not easy to live your entire life being threatened by others, but that was the life of Jeremiah. His only hope and security in that very insecure world was in the Lord and in the word of God.

We too are living in a time when we are being threatened by a variety of things. We can use a book like Jeremiah.

QUESTION #3 – Who wrote Jeremiah?

Jeremiah was written by Jeremiah. Jeremiah had a secretary whose name was Baruch. Dr. Thomas Constable said “Baruch was to Jeremiah what Luke was to Paul; his companion, amanuensis and biographer” (*Notes on Jeremiah*, p. 1).

What we do know is that Jeremiah 1:1 says these are the words of Jeremiah and the end of the book says the same thing, “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah” (Jer. 51:64). Jeremiah easily could have lived long enough to write the last chapter of the book. He would have been around age 85.

One commentator observed: “Jeremiah’s greatest teachings came out of his heart” (Jer. 4:19).

QUESTION #4 – When was Jeremiah written?

The Biblical historical framework of Jeremiah's ministry is found in II Kings 21-25 and II Chronicles 33-36. Israel had already been taken by the Assyrians and Judah was about to be taken by the Babylonians. Before Judah was taken, God had a series of prophets who predicted what would happen. Jeremiah's contemporary prophets were Zephaniah and Habakkuk and then after the Exile began his contemporaries were Ezekiel and Daniel.

Jeremiah was probably born around **643 BC**, which was one year before the end of King Manasseh's reign. Jeremiah began ministry in the 13th year of Josiah's reign (**627 BC**) (1:2). So we may assume that he was called somewhere between the age of 16-20. Josiah was a good king but after he died in **609 BC**, when Jeremiah was about 34, he was replaced by a series of godless kings and political rulers.

Jeremiah predicted what would happen to Judah and Jerusalem and his ministry was still going until and during the Fall of Jerusalem (**586 BC**) (**1:3**). So this would make him about 57 or 58 when Jerusalem fell.

He was still prophesying after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer. 40-44), which lasted to about **582 BC**. This would make Jeremiah about 61 or 62. It is believed that Jeremiah lived to about **560 BC** which would have made him in his mid to upper 80's.

Internal evidence suggests that the first part of the book was written and completed near the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (**605 BC**) (36:1-2). At that time Jeremiah would have been 38-40. Jeremiah seemed to be writing and documenting things as he went along. **But in 605 BC he instructed Baruch, his scribal companion, to write a scroll of his oracles.**

We conclude that the book of Jeremiah was written by Jeremiah over about a 50 year span of time between 630-580 BC.

QUESTION #5 – What is the theme of Jeremiah?

Jeremiah lived at a time that was very depressing. Israel in the north was gone. Assyria had invaded her and conquered her in 722 BC. Only Judah in the south still existed.

Judah was being politically and religiously governed by godless people. So Jeremiah told them all that they needed to listen to the word of God and turn back to the Lord. He told that message to kings, priests, false prophets and ordinary people. But the people would not listen to him.

So what Jeremiah does is to show what God will do to His own people if they turn away from Him and His word and do not turn back to Him.

Jeremiah makes it very clear that when a nation or a people refuse to turn back to God and His word and gracious invitation, God will judge them and ruin them with one disaster after another.

Jeremiah says God offers grace to sinful people and nations and if they refuse to respond to Him, He will destroy them and bring them to national ruin.

Dr. C. I. Scofield said the theme of the book is “Warning and Judgment.”

Because he told the truth, he found himself in trouble, deep trouble but that did not stop him. Even though he had horrible things happen to him. **The thing that dominated Jeremiah was the faith and confidence that he had in God and His promises (18:8; 29:14; 32:1-15).**

Jeremiah had two main focuses of his life and ministry:

Focus #1 - Jeremiah was focused on God's word.

Focus #2 - Jeremiah was focused on God's people.

God's people were in trouble and heading to disaster and God raised up Jeremiah to tell them that. Jeremiah's job was a tough one. He needed to tell God's people their time for grace was just about up.

God graciously gives His people time to turn from their sin and return to Him. If they will do it, He will forgive them and bless them. If they do not do that, He will crush them. That is what the book of Jeremiah guarantees.

The odds of people taking this seriously are very low but “perhaps” some going through this study will and those who do will receive the blessings of God.