

# **Jeremiah Lesson 1**

## **Overview**



*Jeremiah Lamenting the  
Destruction of Jerusalem; 1630;  
Rembrandt; Rijksmuseum,  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

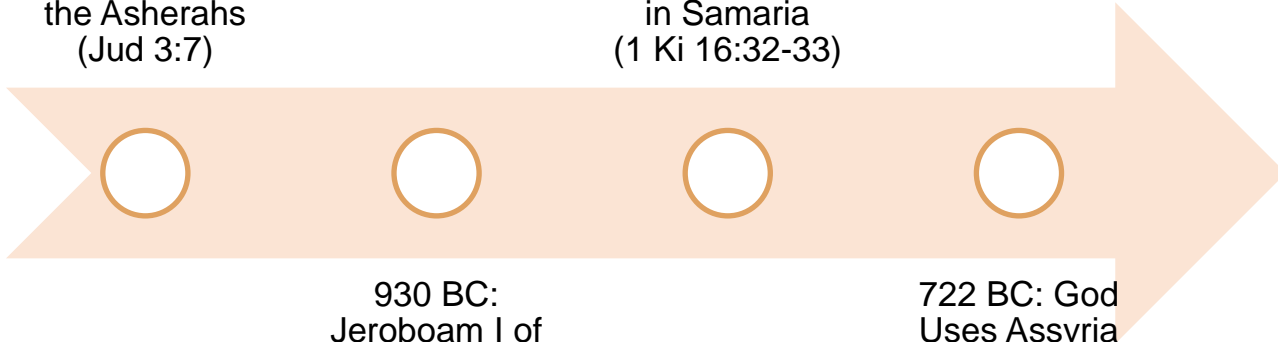
# Jeremiah

- Called to Preach a Message of Repentance to Judah
- Despite the Reforms of King Josiah of Judah, the People Refused to Stop Sinning Against the Lord and Continued to Break the Old Covenant (Covenant at Mt. Sinai)
- How Had Things Gone So Awry in Judah That God Was Compelled to Send Babylon to Destroy Judah and Send Its People Into Exile?

# Timetable of a Downward Spiral

1375 BC:  
Israel Serves  
the Baals and  
the Asherahs  
(Jud 3:7)

874 BC: Ahab  
of Israel Builds  
an Altar to Baal  
in Samaria  
(1 Ki 16:32-33)



930 BC:  
Jeroboam I of  
Israel Puts  
Golden Calves  
at Bethel and  
Dan  
(1 Ki 12: 26-  
31)

722 BC: God  
Uses Assyria  
to Send the  
Nation of Israel  
Into Exile  
(2 Ki 17:22-24)

# Back to Judah

- In 703 BC, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, Decides to Invade Judah
- Hezekiah Bribes Sennacherib With Gold and Silver from the Temple and the Royal Palace
- Because Hezekiah Did What Was Right in the Eyes of the Lord, He Delivered Jerusalem From Assyria
- The 2 Kings After Hezekiah, Manasseh and Amon, Did Evil in the Sight of the Lord
- Manasseh Rebuilt the High Places Hezekiah Had Destroyed; Erected Altars to Baal; Made an Asherah Pole; Worshipped the Starry Hosts; Built Altars to Idols in the Temple; Sacrificed His Son to Molech
- Amon Followed in His Father's Footsteps

# Josiah

- Josiah, Amon's Son, Ruled From 640 to 609 BC
- Called the Last Good King of Judah
- Attempted a Number of Religious Reforms, But the People Continued to Worship Idols and to Break the Covenant
- As Jeremiah Began to Preach, Assyria Was Collapsing. Egypt and Babylon Stepped in to Fill the Void
- Evidence of This is Josiah's Death at the Hands of Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo in Israel

**THE KINGDOMS OF  
ISRAEL AND JUDAH**

1 KINGS 12



Divided Kingdom of Northern Israel and Judah Map; [www.conformingtojesus.com](http://www.conformingtojesus.com)



Tel Megiddo;  
[www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)



# Structure of Jeremiah

- A Collection of Shorter Books; Frequently, There are Books Within Books
- 1<sup>st</sup> Collection: Chapters 1-25: Divine Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem; 627 BC to 605 BC
  - Jeremiah 14:1-15:4: Concerning The Drought
  - Jeremiah 21:11 – 23:8: To the Royal House of Judah
  - Jeremiah 23:9-40: To the Prophets
  - Within Jeremiah 11-20: Jeremiah's Confessions

# Structure of Jeremiah

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Collection: Chapters 30-33: The Book of Consolation, Addressing the Hopes of Restoration for Jerusalem
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Collection: Chapters 46-51, the Oracles Against the Nations
- 4<sup>th</sup> Collection: Chapters 26-36, Oracles and Sayings
- 5<sup>th</sup> Collection: Chapters 37-45, Jeremiah's Life, Ministry, and Exile
- Chapter 52 is a Historical Appendix to 2 Kings 24
- Be Aware That the Chapters Are Not in Chronological Order

## Jeremiah

### Lesson 1: Overview

1. Based on your current understanding of Jeremiah, what are some of its key themes? Are there particular passages or verses that come to mind when you think about this book?
  - Calls for repentance for sin and for breaking the Covenant
  - Criticism of Judah's kings
  - The necessity of God punishing sin; judgment against the nations
  - God's perpetual love of his creation shown by not destroying all the Israelites and by promising salvation through a king from the line of David
  - A new covenant in which God's people would write His laws on their heart
  - The sovereignty of God
  - God equips his prophets for their work
  - God keeps his promises
  - *Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. Jeremiah 31:8*
  - *Thus says the LORD: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." Jeremiah 31:15*
  - *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jeremiah 31:31-34*
2. Take some time to read through 2 Kings 22-25, which records events during the lifetime of Jeremiah. Write down some observations about key events, the leaders of Judah, and its people.
  - King **Josiah** became king at age 8 and rule for 31 years. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.
  - While Josiah was king, the high priest found the Book of the Law while the Temple was being restored.
  - Huldah the prophet gave the word of the Lord: God is going to bring disaster on Judah and its people because they have forsaken God and worshipped idols.

- Josiah had the Book of the Law (either Deuteronomy or the entire Mosaic law) read to all the people. He ordered all idols removed from the Temple and all idol altars destroyed. He did away with idolatrous priests appointed by the prior kings of Judah. He eliminated the Asherah pole in the Temple and tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes. He ordered that the high places and Topheth in the valley of Ben Hinnom be desecrated. He got rid of mediums, spiritualists, and household Gods. He ordered that the Passover be celebrated.
  - Nevertheless, God did not turn away from his fierce anger.
  - Josiah was killed in battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt at Megiddo.
  - **Jehoahaz**, Josiah's son, replaced him. He ruled only 3 months and did evil in the sight of the Lord. Pharaoh Necho took Jehoahaz to Egypt where he died.
  - Pharaoh Necho made **Eliakim**, son of Josiah, king and changed his name to **Jehoiakim**. Jehoiakim reigned for 11 years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord. During his reign, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Judah and Jehoiakim became his vassal for 3 years. Afterwards, he rebelled but God sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders to destroy Judah.
  - **Jehoiachin** followed Jehoiakim. He reigned for 3 months and did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar took the treasures of the Temple and the royal palace back to Babylon.
  - Nebuchadnezzar put **Mattaniah**, Jehoiachin's uncle, on the throne and changed his name to **Zedekiah**.
  - Zedekiah reigned for 11 years and did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who then laid siege to Jerusalem for 3 years. Zedekiah fled the city but was captured. Nebuchadnezzar had all his sons executed before his eyes; he then blinded Zedekiah and took him in chains to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar burned the Temple, the palace, and the houses of Jerusalem. All the remaining Temple furnishings were taken to Babylon. All but the poorest people were taken into exile.
  - Nebuchadnezzar put **Gedaliah** in charge of Judah as governor. After 7 months, Gedaliah was assassinated. All the remaining people fled, along with the army officers, to Egypt.
  - In the 37<sup>th</sup> year of the exile of Jehoiachin, Awel-Marduk of Babylon released him from prison.
3. What aspects of Jeremiah are you most looking forward to studying? Are there any specific questions that you hope to have answered through this study?
- Trying to understand why the people of Judah still refused to repent of their sins, even after the destruction of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians.
  - Gain a better understanding of the construction and order of the book of Jeremiah.

## Jeremiah

### Lesson 1: Overview

- As you learned from the introduction to Jeremiah and your readings from 2 Kings 22-25, the prophet Jeremiah was called to preach a message of repentance to the people of Judah.
- Despite the reforms of King Josiah of Judah, the last “good” king of Judah in the eyes of the Lord, the people refused to stop sinning against the Lord and continued to break the Old Covenant (the Covenant of Mt. Sinai).
- As a result, God, who must punish sin, used the Babylonians to punish Judah.
- We cannot begin our study of Jeremiah without asking the question “how did we get here?” Or “how had things gone so awry in Judah that God was compelled to send Babylon to destroy Judah and send its people into exile in Babylon; and, in the case of Jeremiah, in Egypt?”
- It is helpful to return to Deuteronomy 28: 15-68 where God delivers the curses for disobedience to his Covenant with the Israelites, given at Mt. Sinai. These words are given before Moses dies, after blessing the tribes of Israel, and before Joshua leads the Israelites into the Promised Land.
  - This is a long passage, so here are a few key points from God’s words:
  - The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land (Dt 28:18)
  - The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies (Dt 28:25)
  - A people you do not know will eat what your land and labor produce, and you will have nothing but cruel oppression all your days (Dt 28:33)
  - The Lord will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your ancestors (Dt 28:36)
  - In nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the Lord sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you (Dt 28:48)
  - The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand (Dt 28:49)

- Then the Lord will scatter you among the nations, from one end of the earth to the other (Dt 28:64)
- Despite these warnings, the Israelites wasted no time turning to idol worship, beginning with the recording in Judges 3:7:
  - The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord; they forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs (Canaanite god and consort).
- Things go for from bad to worse after the death of King Solomon. The nation of Israel splits into 2 pieces: 10 tribes in the North (called Israel) and 2 tribes in the South (called Judah). Jeroboam I ruled Israel and 1 Kings 12:26-31 records the following:
  - Jeroboam thought to himself, “The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David.<sup>27</sup> If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.”<sup>28</sup> After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”<sup>29</sup> One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan.<sup>30</sup> And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other.<sup>31</sup> Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites.<sup>32</sup> He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel he also installed priests at the high places he had made.<sup>33</sup> On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel. So he instituted the festival for the Israelites and went up to the altar to make offerings.
- As if this were not insult enough, King Ahab of Israel did the following, as recorded in 1 Kings 16:32-33:
  - He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria.<sup>33</sup> Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.
- God’s anger burned fiercely against the people and kings of the Northern Kingdom, who repeatedly and passionately fell into idol worship. God, who desires that none should perish yet who also must punish sin, finally used the nation of Assyria to punish Israel for her sins.

- The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them<sup>23</sup> until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.<sup>24</sup> The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. 2 Kings 17:22-24
- When we talk about God's patience and his desire that no one would perish (Exodus 34:6; 2 Peter 3:9), this chart is a perfect example. God allowed the Israelites the chance to repent for 653 years before using the Assyrians to destroy Israel.
- When Hezekiah was King of Judah, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, pressed into Judah after destroying Israel in 703 BC. Hezekiah thought to bribe Sennacherib by giving him all the gold ornamentation of the Temple, all the silver in the Temple, and all the treasuries of the royal palace. Nevertheless, Sennacherib sent an army to Jerusalem. Because Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, the Lord delivered Jerusalem from Assyria after Hezekiah prayed to God for deliverance.
- The 2 kings of Judah following Hezekiah, Manasseh and Amon, both did evil in the sight of the Lord.
- Manasseh rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshipped them. He built altars to idols in the Temple. He sacrificed his own son in the fire to the god Molech, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritualists. Amon, Manasseh's son, followed in his father's footsteps.
- This brings us up to the reign of King Josiah, Amon's son. Josiah, who ruled from 640 to 609 BC, is called the last good king of Judah.
- Josiah attempted a number of religious reforms, but the people continued to worship idols and break the Covenant.
- As Jeremiah began to preach, the nation of Assyria was collapsing. Egypt and Babylon stepped in to fill the void. This is readily evident when we see Pharaoh Necho of Egypt kill King Josiah of Judah at Megiddo in Israel in 609 BC. Megiddo was likely destroyed during the Assyrian invasion.
- Let us stop here and briefly discuss the structure of the book of Jeremiah. Here are a few key points:
  - One way to describe Jeremiah is to consider it a collection of shorter books. And, frequently, there are books within books.

- Chapters 1-25: Divine Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem is the first collection. These chapters cover the period 627 BC to 605 BC (the year of Jeremiah's calling to be a prophet to the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's rule).
- Within this collection, there are some smaller books such as:
  - Jeremiah 14:1 – 15:4, "The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought"
  - Jeremiah 21:11 – 23:8, "to the Royal House of Judah"
  - Jeremiah 23:9-40, "To the Prophets"
  - Within Jeremiah 11-20 are found Jeremiah's "Confessions"
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> major collection consists of chapters 30-33 The Book of Consolation, which addresses the hopes of restoration for Jerusalem.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> major collection consists of Chapters 46-51, the Oracles against the Nations.
- A 4<sup>th</sup> major collection consists of Chapters 26-36, which are a collection of oracles and sayings.
- A 5<sup>th</sup> collection consists of Chapters 37-45, which cover Jeremiah's life and ministry from 587 BC (the fall of Jerusalem) and his ministry while in exile in Egypt.
- Chapter 52 is a historical appendix to 2 Kings 24, and it includes information not recorded elsewhere in the Bible.
- Lastly, be aware that the information with the various chapters is not always in chronological order. Jeremiah wrote and dictated various sections of the book throughout his life, not contemporaneously.