

# JEREMIAH

## 1 The Life and Times of Jeremiah the Prophet

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Jeremiah has been unfairly labelled as the prophet of doom and gloom. In fact, if someone is of a miserable disposition they may be called a Jeremiah.

His message to the nation of Judah was that the people repent and return to the Lord or the Lord would affect correction and such punishment would be Judah's fault. Through Jeremiah, God pleads with His people and in loving terms. The prophet makes it clear that God is patient and long suffering towards His people to whom He still shows loving kindness and this is a positive message of this book(31.3,33.3 etc.)

At times of great importance, God has called men of spiritual stature to encourage the people to accept God's Will and blessings. Here the Lord chooses Jeremiah at a time when the southern kingdom of Judah was in an appalling state of political and spiritual crisis and neighbouring states were also in severe difficulties. Jeremiah was, at first, reluctant to take on the commission from the Lord on the grounds of his being young.

In his time, the prophet saw the collapse of Assyria due to internal political weaknesses and Jeremiah saw the rise of the Babylonians, often called the Chaldeans who eventually crushed the Egyptian armies. The collapse of Assyria meant that Judah could now become independent.

Jeremiah, sometimes called the Weeping Prophet, expresses his concerns at the sinful state of Judah and its continuing decline.

It was probably in 645 BC that Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, two and a half miles north east of Jerusalem and about the time that good king Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight in 640. Josiah's father was king Ammon who reigned for two years (642 to 640) and was then assassinated by his servants. Ammon's father was King Manasseh who reigned for fifty five years (687/6 to 642) and he was an idolater worshipping many pagan gods and reversing the reforms of his father, Hezekiah.

Josiah's reforms began around 622 BC when he was about eighteen

These reforms began with the repairs to the Temple which had been neglected (2 Kings 22. 3-10). During this refurbishment, Hilkiah, the High Priest, found the Book of the Law which was probably the Pentateuch written by Moses (2 Kings 22.8). Hilkiah may have been Jeremiah's father. Josiah was deeply affected by this discovery and asked Hilkiah and others to enquire of the Lord as to what must be done (2 Kings 22.11ff.)

All the vessels made for the pagan gods of Baal, Asherah and others were removed and destroyed. All the priests involved in pagan worship were deposed. Josiah destroyed all the male prostitutes and homosexuals who practised their depravities in the Temple. The young king defiled Topheth in the valley of Hinnom where children walked through the fatal fire as sacrifices to Molech. Josiah defiled the high places and temples built for the worship of pagan gods including those built by evil Solomon to the god Chemosh and Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Sidonians (2 Kings 23. 4-13).

Josiah also destroyed spiritism and spiritualism. Such matters including witchcraft are condemned in the Scriptures (Exodus 22.18, Leviticus 19.31, Deuteronomy 18,10ff, Acts 8.11 etc.)

God abhors spiritualism and witchcraft. He hates prostitution, homosexuality and idolatry.

The young King reintroduced the Passover. The Book of the Law was read to the people and the people's covenant with God was reinstated.

It is a rhetoric question but was there ever a king before or since Josiah who so honoured the Lord and served Him as well as Josiah did? There were no such reforms in Israel or in Judah before or since. In this context, Josiah must be the greatest of all the Jewish kings.

It is also the tenacity of Jeremiah that deserves attention. He did not abandon his mission despite Judah falling back into apostasy after the reforms. He was an ardent patriot who loved his people and loved God. Not only was he a great prophet but a hero.

He showed tremendous resolve and courage. He was attacked by his own brethren (12.6), beaten by a priest, Pashur, and by false prophets (20. 1-4), imprisoned by king Zedekiah (38.4) and threatened with death (38.6), thrown into a cistern of water by Judah officials (38.6), opposed by a false prophet, Hananiah, and had a yoke put around his neck (28). He was despised because of his message for Judah to repent and turn to the Lord or face the subsequent threat of the Babylonians.

Jeremiah preached with his rebukes and warnings but also emphasised the blessings of a longsuffering God (chapters 3-20). He denounced false prophets, false shepherds and rulers (chapters 21 to 23). He predicted Divine judgments, the overthrow of Jerusalem and the seventy years captivity in Babylon (chapters 25-29), the eventual restoration of the Jews (chapters 30 -33). He prophesied concerning the evil ways of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah (chapters 34 to 39) and spoke of the wretched conditions of the remnant left in Judah and sent messages to them (chapters 40 - 44). There was his encouragement to Baruch (chapter 45) and his prophecies to the hostile and neighbouring nations (chapters 46-51)

Jeremiah was dedicated to God and kept faithful to Him under extreme pressure and hatred.

His ministry was during the reign of five successive kings namely

Josiah	640-609
Jehoahaz	609
Jehoiakim	609-598
Jehoiachin	598-597
Zedekiah	597-587

Josiah had four sons, Johanan and Elikam by Zebudah and Mattanyahu and Shallum by Hamutal.

Shallum succeeded Josiah with the new name of Jehoahaz and he was succeeded by Elikam known as Jehoiakim who was succeeded by his son Jeconiah who, in turn, was succeeded by Mattanyahu under the name of Zedekiah.

Josiah came to the throne when the international situation was in an appalling and confused state. Assyria was disintegrating and Egypt was recovering from Assyrian rule.

Pharaoh Necho II led an army to the aid of Assyria and decided to pass through Judah. Josiah saw this as a threat and there was an ensuing battle at Megiddo in which Josiah was hit by an arrow and died, whether in the battle or when he returned to Jerusalem and succumbed to his wound.

Jehoahaz reigned for three months and reversed the reforms of his father but was deposed by Necho and taken into captivity in Egypt. Necho appointed Jehoiakim king and he reigned for eleven years as a vassal to Egypt paying them a substantial tribute.

When the Egyptians were defeated by the Babylonians at Carchemish, Jehoiakim changed his allegiance and paid tribute to Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon. Then Jehoiakim changed sides again and went back to Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 599 and laid siege to Jerusalem. Jehoiakim died and his body was thrown from the city walls. He is known for burning the manuscript of a prophecy of Jeremiah.

Jeconiah came to the throne and Jerusalem fell in three months. Jeconiah, his household and many craftsmen from Judah were exiled to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar installed Zedekiah as king and received heavy tribute from him. In the eleventh year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem after an eighteen month siege. Zedekiah saw his sons put to death, was blinded and taken in chains to Babylon.

Typology is the study of types. In Christian circles, it is a doctrine or theory concerning the predictive relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament. Events, persons or statements in the Old Testament are types prefiguring aspects of Christ's life as seen in the New Testament. Jonah is said to be a type of Christ in that he survived in the belly of the great fish and was saved from death.

This theory existed in the early church but was most common in the days of Calvin who taught that before the foundation of the world God choose who were to be saved and who were to be mortally lost (his words, not mine). He also taught that man does not have freewill to choose salvation.

Joseph is said to be a type of Christ as is Moses and the brazen serpent he set up on a pole.

A type is someone who has common traits and characteristics that they share with another which sets them apart as a class. It is someone who has the same features, attributes and life style or the same rank.

I have only ever heard people speak of someone being a type of Christ which means that that someone is of the same lifestyle, character and morality as Christ which is, to say the least, misleading.

However, there are similarities between Jeremiah and Christ in that they were both faithful to God; they were both men of sorrows, despised and acquainted with grief, disowned by their own people and persecuted.

However, Jeremiah is not a type of Christ in that he is not of the same rank. Who can compare with the Lord? (Isaiah 46.5, 40.16, Mark 12, 32 etc.)

Jerusalem and Judah was still inhabited even after the siege and consequent Babylonian captivity of seventy years. Nebuchadnezzar respected Jeremiah and treated him well and when the Babylonian king appointed Gedaliah to be governor of Judah, Jeremiah went with him apparently making a home for himself in Mizpah. Gedaliah's father, Ahikam, defended Jeremiah from possible death at the hands of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 26). Gedaliah was murdered by an Israelite prince for working for the Babylonians and Nebuchadnezzar then appointed Johanan to be governor but this post did not suit him. He fled to Egypt with Jeremiah and his faithful aide Baruch (Jeremiah 43) where tradition says Baruch soon died and Jeremiah also eventually died in Egypt.

There is an accolade bestowed upon Jeremiah in Matthew 16. When the Lord and His disciples came to Caesarea Philippi He asked his disciples, "Who do men think that I the Son of Man am?" The reply

was that some said he was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. The mention of Jeremiah by name has given rise to his being called the greatest of the prophets.

In Matthew 2.17 reference is made to Jeremiah's prophecy of the slaughter of the innocents and in 27 9 the betrayal for thirty pieces of silver is mentioned.

The greatest of the prophets. Do we have men like this today?

(1737)

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