

do you think his attitude was to his own country?

Consider: The popular definition of a prophet is someone who foretells the future. How far does Jeremiah fit this definition? Look up 'prophet' in a good Bible Dictionary to see all the main features.

Weekend

There is plenty more of the book for you to read! If you read on, you will find out what happened to Jeremiah in the confused situation in Judah after the fall of Jerusalem. This is followed by a collection of oracles to foreign nations (chapters 46-51) from different points in Jeremiah's career. Alternatively, you can go back and fill in some of the bits we skipped over. As you read, remember that the material is not in chronological order, and look out for any indications of when particular prophecies or incidents are to be dated.

You could read further into Jeremiah's life and message with two IVP publications: "*Jeremiah: Speaking for God in a time of crisis*", by David Day, and "*The Message of Jeremiah*", by Derek Kidner.

Notes



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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Week 11: The Book of Jeremiah, 2 (A historical study)

Day 1. The scroll

Jeremiah 36

This chapter gives us a fascinating glimpse of how some of Jeremiah's prophecies came to be written down. The scroll was probably the first stage in the compilation of the Book of Jeremiah as we now have it.

Note the timing of this incident (verses 1 and 9), probably soon after the temple sermon, which may explain why Jeremiah was banned from the temple (verse 5). The fourth year of Jehoiakim (605/604 BC) was shortly after the Egyptians had been decisively beaten by the Babylonians at the Battle of Carchemish, and the fast (verse 9) may have been in response to national danger, as Babylon had just defeated one of Judah's neighbours, Ashkelon.

Note: Baruch, a close associate of Jeremiah. See 32:12-16; 43:3-6; 45.

1. What can you find out from this chapter about the contents of the scroll? What was its basic message?

Note: Verse 23. Scrolls were written sideways, in vertical columns.

2. Look at how the different characters in the chapter reacted to the message. If you were a political commentator, how would you describe the political situation in Judah? (The officials in verses 10-12 were important ones - the contemporary equivalent of cabinet ministers.) You might try writing a newspaper article assessing the situation.

Consider: We see here some more examples of people's reactions to God's word. How do they compare with Josiah's (Week 10, Study 2)? How has what you learnt then affected your attitude to subsequent studies?

Day 2. The letter to the exiles

Jeremiah 29: 1-32

This letter, and the response to it (verses 24-32), perhaps came from the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign (594/593 BC). Some of the people were in exile in Babylon, and this letter may have followed a period of unrest among them.

Note: Verse 2. Jeconiah (RSV) is another name for Jehoiachin. Verse 17. The reference to figs comes from Jeremiah's oracle in chapter 24, about God's plan for the exiles, and those who remained in Jerusalem.

1. What message do you think the false prophets were preaching to the exiles?
2. Why were the people likely to believe them, rather than Jeremiah?
3. What aspects of Jeremiah's message do you think the exiles would have found unexpected? (Remember that the Jews thought that the Lord hearing their prayers was associated with the functioning of the temple and the sacrificial system in Jerusalem.)

Consider: The exiles must have felt very confused as they tried to work out God's purposes for them in the middle of what was going on. Have you ever known such a confusing situation? How did things work out? What can you learn to help you cope with such situations in the future? You may find Romans 8:28 a helpful verse to meditate on and memorize as you consider this.

Pray for those people you know who are struggling to know what God is doing in their life and circumstances at the present time.

Day 3. Hope for the future

Jeremiah 31: 23-40

Chapters 30 and 31 contain a collection of sayings about Israel's hope for the future and probably originally circulated as a separate scroll (perhaps with chapters 32 and 33 as well) - a Book of Comfort.

As you read the passage, try to put yourself in the position of the exiles in Babylon, and think how they would have reacted to these promises.

Notes: 31:23 The mountain is Mount Zion, where the temple stood in Jerusalem. 31:29 This popular saying probably reflects a feeling among the exiles that they were being punished unjustly for the sins of their ancestors.

1. What promises does God make here?
2. How can the Israelites be sure the promises will be kept?
3. How many differences can you find between the old form of religion (its worst forms were denounced by Jeremiah in chapter 7) and the new covenant promised here (verse 31)?

The concept of the new covenant is very important in the New Testament. It appears in the words of institution at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25) and the concept is used elsewhere by Paul (eg. 2 Corinthians 3:6). This passage from Jeremiah is quoted by the writer to the Hebrews (8:10-12; 10:16-17) in his argument to show that Jesus has brought about a new state of affairs in man's relationship with God.

Worship: Use God's description of His new relationship with His people described in verses 33 & 34, as a basis for your personal praise and thanks for your relationship with Him.

Day 4. Jerusalem under siege

Jeremiah 37-38

These incidents can be dated to 589/588 BC. It would seem that Zedekiah, although installed as a puppet-king by Nebuchadnezzar, had rebelled against his masters (see 2 Kings 24:20) and that in consequence the Babylonians (Chaldeans, RSV) had laid siege to Jerusalem. Chapter 37 begins with a lull in the siege, caused by an Egyptian army moving towards the city. Imagine the feelings of joy and relief! Jeremiah, however, had the job of telling people that this is not the end of the matter - the Babylonians will return to the attack - and by the time we get to 37:17 it seems that the siege has been resumed.

Note: 37:12 Perhaps a field Jeremiah bought. See 32:1-15.

1. What can you learn about Zedekiah's character from these chapters? What factors affected his political judgments?

Note: 38:10 Probably 'three men', not 'thirty' (some translations).

2. What do you learn about Jeremiah's character from the way he copes with opposition? (NB. The officials who are hostile to him are different from those in chapter 36, who were presumably by now in exile in Babylon.)
3. Compare this with what you learnt about Jeremiah in Week 10, Study 1. How has his character developed during his ministry?

Consider: Jeremiah's strength of character is a tribute to God keeping his promises (1:17-19). That did not mean, however, that he found life easy, as we see in these chapters. What evidence can you find of God's faithfulness in your own life at the moment? **Praise** Him for it!

Day 5. The fall of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 39:1 – 40:6

The event which Jeremiah had first prophesied forty years previously (1:13-16) finally happened. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and became subject to their rule (39:3 describes the setting-up of a military government). We have read already a fuller account of this in 2 Kings 25:1-12 (repeated in substantially the same form in Jeremiah 52, as a postscript to the book).

1. Look back to Week 10, Study 5 and see what you found out about the causes of Judah's downfall. Do you want to add anything in the light of your subsequent reading?
2. In the general judgment which was coming on Judah, the exiles had complained that some of them were being punished unjustly (Jeremiah 31:29-30). How does the example of Ebed-Melech (39:15-18) and indeed Jeremiah himself help to understand what was happening? (How had Ebed-Melech shown his trust in God (39:18)?)
3. Presumably Jeremiah was treated kindly because he was thought to be a friend to Babylon. From this passage, and from your previous reading, what