

**INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH  
(PART #1)**

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**One thing is sure when you read through the Bible honestly and objectively and that is God never looks favorably on sin and He does not let His people get away with it or overlook it forever. If God's people don't do something about sin, He will!**

He offers His grace. He gives people time to repent. He gives people more time than they ever deserve to repent and turn to Him and His word in order to experience His forgiveness and favor and His blessings. But His invitation to grace and mercy has limits.

That message does not faze most people. Most people are not threatened by that, even if a prophet of God were telling them that.

**Unfortunately, the track record of the majority of even God's own people is the same. Most are not threatened by the thought of judgment and most will not submit to the word of God.** They do not listen to the word of God and they do not pay attention to the warnings until finally God says that is it; I have had enough; I will punish My own people for their sin.

When God begins to cause the world to crumble, the people need to be warned they have crossed a line and the ruin and the destruction they are experiencing is coming directly from the sovereign hand of the sovereign God.

I want to read you something written by J. Vernon McGee in 1982: "You and I are living at a time which is probably like the time of Jeremiah. Ours is a great nation today, and we have accomplished many things. We have gone to the moon, and we have produced atom bombs. Although we are a strong nation, within is the same corruption which will actually carry us down to dismemberment and disaster. It is coming, my friend. Revolution may be just around the corner. I know that what I am saying is not popular today. We don't hear anything like this through the media. Instead, we have panels of experts who discuss how we are going to improve society and how we can work out our problems. Today God is left out of the picture totally—absolutely left out. If the Bible is mentioned, it is mentioned with a curled lip by some unbeliever. The ones who are believers are pushed aside, I know that. That is why I say to you that I think we are in very much the same position that Jeremiah was in. For that reason I know this book is going to have a message for us today" (*The Book of Jeremiah*, Thru The Bible, Vol. 3, pp. 351-352).

That message that God will punish and is in the process of judging is sure not a popular message today. It has never been a popular message in any dispensation. There is absolutely nothing popular today about warning people that they need to deal with their sin or God will punish them. God will destroy a nation. God may be in the process right now of judging and destroying America.

You will not hear that on the news. In fact, just recently, a CNN reporter said, "America doesn't need God."

The truth is you won't even hear much about that in churches anymore. It is all about making people feel good and welcome. The message of the church is come as you are, stay as you are, enjoy life as you are and don't worry about anything future because you are just fine.

**But a critical subject, when it comes to having a wonderful, blessed relationship with God, is the subject of sin.** God expects His people to do something about the sin in their own lives. He expects nations and its state and national leaders to do something about sin in their states and nation or He will destroy them.

**Never is that point more vivid than when you go through the book of Jeremiah.** When Jeremiah wrote Jeremiah, God sent him to warn His own people that He was about to hammer them with judgment. Then He told Jeremiah, when you get done warning them, you need to go to the other nations and tell them I am going to hammer them and come after them. In fact, God actually says that is exactly what His Word will do; it is like a hammer that will shatter them to pieces (Jer. 23:29). Most people don't want the Bible to say that. Most want ears tickled so they feel good. Time for feeling good was over.

God had seen enough. His people had refused His warnings so He sent Jeremiah to tell His own people and the nations the time was just about up. Jeremiah would not have a fun ministry or a fun assignment. People hated him because he was way too political and way too personal. He told people the truth of God and pointed out the corruption of the religious and political world.

As a result, as you can imagine, Jeremiah was not well-received or accepted. He was often very lonely and sad. **He never saw anyone favorably respond to him or his message. He pleaded with kings and priests and religious leaders and common people to turn back to God and he never saw anyone do it.**

He had a broken heart and there were times he literally wept. People of power didn't like him or his message because what he was saying was not popular. He was not loved in the political world and he was not loved in the religious world. He was not loved by average people in the world. But what Jeremiah was saying was the truth of God and he kept heralding the truth because that is what people needed to hear.

That is what our world needs to hear right now. The truth is we are a corrupt, lawless, godless, arrogant, defiant nation. We promote abominable evil and sin and we no longer blush at it; in fact, we flaunt it. We don't even know how to blush at sin any more (Jer. 8:12).

This world, this country and this state are coming under the chastising judgment of a Holy God. That is what this nation and state needs to hear. Our world is falling apart and what we need to hear right now is not someone who goes out and tells the people you are all loved just the way you are. We need to be warned that we need to turn from our evil and sin because if we don't, God will destroy this nation and He will take away its freedoms.

At this point in time, God's people had better be moving in a God-honoring direction because the judgment of God is starting to flow. It is coming. If you have never been serious about the word of God and applying it to your own life, this is the time.

You may ask, where are you getting ideas like that? Where do you see this? **From a book in the Bible named Jeremiah.** We need this book right here and right now.

So in the next several weeks we would like to take you through the very powerful, very personal, very practical and very prophetic study of the book of Jeremiah.

We begin today by introducing you to the book. We will introduce the book to you by asking and answering some introductory questions:

#### **QUESTION #1** – Why study Jeremiah?

There are many reasons to study this book, but we will give six reasons:

**Reason #1** - Because Jeremiah is one of only 66 inspired books of God given to man.

I do not know of another time in history when the Bible is so needed and yet so ignored. Almighty God gave 66 books in writing to mankind and, for the most part, most people ignore them. In fact, we will prove our point later concerning this very book.

**The book of Jeremiah is a book inspired by God. One of only 66 books that has been inspired by God.** In fact, the book opens in Jeremiah 1:1-2 by saying these are the “words of Jeremiah...to whom the word of the LORD came” (1:1-2). So right at the beginning, we learn that this is a writing stating and claiming that is the inspired word of God.

**Jeremiah must be a very important inspired book because in the Hebrew Bible, it is longer than Isaiah and Ezekiel, and is the second longest Hebrew book in the Old Testament.** The only book larger than Jeremiah is the book of Psalms.

**Jeremiah is classified as one of the major prophets in the O.T..** It is classified a major prophet because of the size of the book. We know that Jesus gave somewhat of a breakdown classification of O.T. books in Luke 24:44 and He said there is the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.

When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek (Septuagint) in Alexandria, Egypt (250-150 BC), they classified 17 books as being prophets. They classified Isaiah, **Jeremiah**, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel as Major Prophets (5 books total) and Hosea-Malachi as Minor Prophets (12 books total).

If you count all of the Twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea-Malachi), **Jeremiah is actually longer by 1/3 than all of them combined. Just the pure size of the book would lead us to the conclusion and conviction that this is a very special, inspired book of God.**

Around the year AD 600-900, a careful process began to copy and vowel point the Hebrew text for reading and pronunciation. This text was called the Masoretic text. Most English Bible translations of the O.T. are based on the Hebrew Masoretic text. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, the Hebrew manuscripts confirmed the accuracy of the Masoretic text.

The Hebrew text of Jeremiah, as we now have in the Masoretic Hebrew text, has tremendous support for the fact that it is inspired by God. In fact, in some ways the Hebrew text of Jeremiah has double support. At one point, Jeremiah's text was cut and burned (Jer. 36:23) and Jeremiah simply dictated another copy to Baruch (Jer. 36:32), who wrote it down again.

The Hebrew manuscript evidence itself is a solid proof that Jeremiah is inspired by God. However there is more evidence than that.

There is a Cairo codex (manuscript in book form with pages) that was written in Hebrew and vowel pointed that contains the book of Jeremiah. This was copied in AD 895.

There was an Aleppo codex of the entire Hebrew Old Testament that was copied in AD 930. It includes Jeremiah.

There is a Leningrad codex of the entire Hebrew Old Testament copied in AD 1008. It includes Jeremiah.

There is a Babylonian codex of Latter Prophets in Hebrew that contains Jeremiah (AD 916).

**Then, as another key confirmatory point, there are the Dead Sea Scrolls.**

In 1952, in Qumran Cave 4, Hebrew manuscripts were discovered from Jeremiah. By Carbon dating the paper, this copy dates to around 168 BC. So the Hebrew text of Jeremiah was carefully copied and preserved.

One of the difficulties of the manuscripts of Jeremiah is the fact that the Septuagint (250 BC), which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew O.T., is about 1/8<sup>th</sup> shorter in content than the Hebrew text. This has caused some to question the Greek and Hebrew variance and discrepancy. The Septuagint was the O.T. Bible that most read who lived outside of Palestine.

But the solution to the seeming problem is that God has preserved the Hebrew text in its entirety and even though some of the repetitious texts are not in the Septuagint (for who knows what reason), it does not in any way distract from the complete Hebrew Text, which we have. Most scholars believe the Masoretic Hebrew Text is more complete and reliable than the Septuagint.

Jeremiah is an inspired book of God that was so profound that Daniel spent his time studying it and based his prophetic understanding on a literal interpretation of it (Daniel 9:2). The actual chapters that Daniel was reading was Jeremiah 25-29 and he says it was written by Jeremiah.

Furthermore, there are multiple references to Jeremiah and quotations from Jeremiah in the New Testament. For example, when Herod was killing babies in Jesus' day, a loud voice was heard in Ramah, Rachel weeping for her children is a quote from Jeremiah (Jer. 31:15). When Jesus visited the temple, He said you have made My house a "den of robbers," which is another quote from Jeremiah (Jer. 7:11). Paul said don't let a man boast in his wisdom or might or riches, but that he knows and understands God, which again is another quote of Jeremiah (Jer. 9:23-24).

These are just a few quotes from Jeremiah proving that not only did Paul think it was an inspired book, but so did Jesus Christ. This is the only reason we ever need for studying any book.

**Reason #2** - Because Jeremiah is a book that majestically exalts God.

Jeremiah is a God-exalting book and this world right now needs to come to terms with the fact that there is a sovereign God who is not happy.

Jeremiah gives us an amazing glimpse many of the amazing Attributes of God. He weaves together many different sides to God. We will certainly see God is righteous and just (Jer. 33:14-16). Do not every forget this. God will track down His own people and severely punish them because they will not deal with sin.

At the same time, He is also gracious and He invites His own people who have sinned to turn back to Him and experience His amazing blessings (Jer. 3:12-13). God invites people who have wallowed in sin and the depths of depravity for years to return to Him and experience His grace and mercy and blessings (Jer. 7:3, 5).

When it comes to God's sovereignty, Jeremiah paints a majestic picture of the Sovereignty of God in all kinds of ways. God sovereignly forms a baby in a mother and knows what He will do with the baby long before it is born (Jer. 1:5). God controls every nation in the world and He can do whatever it is He wants to do at any point in time. In fact, Jeremiah says, "Nothing is too difficult for God to do." In Jeremiah 32:17, he says, "Nothing is too difficult for You." In Jeremiah 32:27 he writes: "Behold, I am the LORD, The God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?"

Those are majestic statements that truly do exalt God. This is a God-exalting book and we need it right now because we need to know that we can turn to a sovereign God who has all power to do whatever He wants to do.

**Reason #3** - Because most know very little about Jeremiah.

Of all of the O.T. major prophetic books, the least read, the least understood and the least completely taught is the book of Jeremiah. It is difficult to find a church or a school that will take you completely through the book of Jeremiah.

It will be interesting when we get into heaven if some minister runs into Jeremiah and he says, “How did it go when you taught my book?” “Was it well received?” “Did people respond?” Most will hang their head because they never taught through the book of Jeremiah. He didn’t write fun stuff. But Jeremiah did not go through all that he did for the fun of it. He had a tough life. **He didn’t spend 40 years writing this so people could overlook it or ignore it.** This is a serious writing for serious times and serious people, and it is a shame how little we know about it.

In fact, even the number of really good commentaries are far and few between when it comes to Jeremiah. Charles Feinberg said, “While many commentaries have been written on the book of Isaiah, Jeremiah has suffered from neglect” (*Jeremiah, The Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 357).

Let me ask some basic questions to see how much we know about Jeremiah: Was Jeremiah a priest? Was he married? Did he have any children? Why is he called the weeping prophet? What was his assignment? How old was he when he started? How old was he when he ended? Why did God tell him to stop attending weddings and funerals (Jer. 16:5-9)? Why did God tell him you stop praying for people (Jer. 7:16; 11:14)? Why did God send him to a family who never drank alcohol and tell them it was God’s will for them to drink wine and command them to drink some wine (Jer. 35:2,5-6)?

Now I don’t ask these questions to embarrass any of us or to play some game of Bible trivia; I ask these questions to make a point. **The point is we don’t know a whole lot about Jeremiah and yet God has given us more information about Jeremiah in the Bible than there is concerning any other prophet.** I think it is time that we go through Jeremiah.

**Reason #4** - Because Jeremiah is a practical book for us in our times right now. **Jer. 18:7-8**

Jeremiah wrote when the world was “coming unglued” (Philip Graham Ryken, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, p. 15). Jeremiah was watching his society fall apart. He watched God’s own people and they were falling apart. He lived through various political and religious leaders who were godless and he saw his nation deteriorating like never before. So God raised up Jeremiah to write a book in that very context. **In other words, Jeremiah writes his book for a time just like ours.**

John Calvin said Jeremiah wrote when the state of the people was becoming totally corrupt and no one was taking the word of God seriously. Jeremiah came and tried to turn the people back to the word of God. It was the heaviest of burdens and assignments (*Jeremiah 1-19*, p. 31).

Now some probably think well this is O.T. teaching and it is aimed at Israel and not us. I want to read the words of Ray Stedman on this point: “We do not want to read this as though it is something remote from us. If you are inclined to say only, ‘Oh, it’s such a pity what’s going to happen to Israel,’ remember this is your story too. This is the way God works. He deals with Israel this way because this is the way He deals with everybody. There is a scriptural principle reflected here which all too often we forget. Paul said very plainly in Galatians 6, “Be not deceived (i.e., don’t kid yourself); God is not cheated (Gal. 6:7a). Just because judgment does not fall immediately upon people, they think they have gotten by. But Paul says, “Don’t fool yourself; God is not cheated. Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption (i.e. trouble, pain, heartache, trial, distress and disaster) Gal. 6:7. Now that is inevitable” (*The Scars of Sin; The Secret of Strength*).

The Apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 10 that these O.T. books and stories are critical to our own existence. Paul said if God sanctioned all the bad things to happen to Israel, he can certainly do the same thing with us (I Cor. 10:1-12). If God’s own people do not turn from their evil sin, God will not just forget it or let it go. He will cause their world to collapse; that point is clearly developed in Jeremiah. However, if they are willing to turn from their sin and turn back to God, He will bless them even if He intended to judge them. We need his book now. Jeremiah is a book for our time. It is a book for this very time.

Can there be more practical statements than Jeremiah 9:3—“Lies and not truth prevail in the Land”; and Jeremiah 48:10—“cursed be the one who does the LORD’S work negligently.” Can there be a more serious threat than when God says, “A destroyer will come to every city, so that no city will escape?” (Jer. 48:8).

**Reason #5** - Because Jeremiah has a life that parallels the life of Jesus Christ like no other.

It is interesting that one of the things that was alleged about Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth, is that people thought He might be Jeremiah (Matt. 16:14). One reason why people would think that is because there were amazing parallels (Basic outline taken from Charles Feinberg, *Jeremiah*, p. 361).

There are 21 parallels between Jeremiah and Jesus Christ:

- 1) Both lived when Jerusalem was about to fall.
- 2) Both specifically prophesied that God’s people would be destroyed.
- 3) Both lived when the Temple in Jerusalem was about to be destroyed.
- 4) Both lived when religion was buried in formalism.
- 5) Both lived in a time when there was a great spiritual vacuum and need.
- 6) Both had a message for Israel and a message for the world.
- 7) Both were conscious of nature and used many figures and illustrations from nature.
- 8) Both came from a godly background: Jeremiah from a priest-prophet, Christ a Divine King.
- 9) Both were very conscious of their calling of God.
- 10) Both condemned the commercialism of the Temple worship. Jer. 7:11; Matt. 21:13
- 11) Both were accused of political treason.
- 12) Both were tried, persecuted and imprisoned.

- 13) Both predicted the destruction of the Temple. Jer. 7:14; Mark 13:2
- 14) Both wept over Jerusalem. Jer. 9:1; Luke 19:41
- 15) Both formerly condemned the priests of their day.
- 16) Both were rejected by their own family. Jer. 12:6; John 1:11
- 17) Both were tenderhearted.
- 18) Both loved Israel deeply.
- 19) Both knew the meaning of extreme loneliness. Jer. 15:10; Is. 53:3
- 20) Both had a very unusual and open fellowship and communication with God.  
Jer. 20:7; John 11:41-42
- 21) Both were individuals the people wanted to kill. Jer. 11:10

It is no wonder that people thought Jesus might be Jeremiah. They did have much in common.

**Reason #6** - Because Jeremiah is a book of prophecy for Israel and all the nations.  
**Jer. 25:30-33; 31:31-37; 51:45ff**

Jeremiah is an important Biblical book of Biblical prophecy. It warns Israel and the nations of things to come. There is a fierce anger of the Lord that will punish and destroy nations, cities and individuals. God can crush a nation and bring it to shame. God does kill people and Jeremiah makes that point very, very clear.

One of the most important prophetic passages in Jeremiah is one that discusses the New Covenant God will one day have with Israel. It is specifically developed in Jeremiah 31:21-34. It predicts a time in which Israel will be forgiven and her sin will be remembered no more.

But be warned. If a nation or individual mocks God and His word, He will crush them. This book of Jeremiah says that to everyone in the world.