

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH #3

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“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. (20:9) But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. (31:31) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Jer.18:6; 20:9; 31:31-34.

I. The Author.

We return to our introduction into the book of Jeremiah. We have seen in our first introduction that Jeremiah is the author of this book and we gave both internal and external evidence for this. Then we looked secondly at:

II. The Life, Call and Ministry of Jeremiah.

We saw those things that transpired in the life Jeremiah along with his own battles in the frustration of these rebellious people who should have been serving Jehovah God instead of Baal and other false gods. As you read this precious book of Jeremiah come to realize that for 40 years Jeremiah was the only faithful prophet and perhaps the one voice of God to the nation of Judah. He pleaded with great passion, preaching with fervency and tears for the people to repent and turn to God or else facing awful doom and judgment. We saw that the sad thing was in spite of his godly and holy efforts: NO ONE LISTENED!

- Jeremiah 6:16 & 17, *“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. 17 Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.”*
- Jeremiah 7:23-26, *“But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. 24 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. 25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: 26 Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.”*

III. The Date.

The third point of our outline in the introduction is the date of Jeremiah's writing. Jeremiah prophesized and ministered during the reign of 5 kings although he did lived through the reign of 7. Before the reign of Josiah, when Jeremiah was a young boy there was Manasseh 697-642 BC and Amon 642-640 BC. Jeremiah was born during the reign of Manasseh, but his calling didn't come until about 626 BC in the 13th year of Josiah's reign, Josiah was Manasseh's grandson. Thus, Jeremiah served as a prophet throughout the remaining years of Josiah's reign who was Judah's last good king. Jeremiah continued until the last ruler of Judah, Zedekiah.

The date of Jeremiah's ministry is from 626 to 586 BC. As we saw earlier Jeremiah began his ministry in the 13th year of King Josiah's reign which would be right around 626 or 627 BC.

As a side note, I wanted to look at (1) King Josiah in my introduction, because he was the last good king they would have. We saw this from 2 Chronicles 34 & 35. The godliness of this man Josiah is something to be studied and emulated. He had a heart for God and for righteousness. What amazes me is the fact that he was only 8 years old when he began to reign and he reigned for 31 years! (From last time: Turn to 2 Kings 22:1 & 2. Let's now look at the similar verses in 2 Chron.34:1-7. Wow to have so much wisdom and a godly appetite at such a young age speaks volumes. He had a godly life and a godly reign. He followed the example of David and never strayed or digressed from such a holy life. Josiah's major concern was over the affairs of the house of God that is; in the restoration of the temple and especially in the restoration of the true worship of the Living and True God. They assigned some sort of fund raising to fix and repair the temple and money was given to those who would do the work. Look at verse 8 – 13 and see the love and concern and how they cared for the house of God.

Notice what ensued in verses 14-28 and behold at what happened during construction and repairs; they found GOD'S WORD, the LAW of MOSES! (Read verses). They tell the king what they found and notice his reaction to this. Look also in 2 Kings 22:16-20. Back to 2 Chron.34:29-33. (Also 2 Kings 23:1-30) Oh to God that we had such a godly man and leader like King Josiah. How was this so? How was it that he became such a lover of God and God's Word? What made the difference? A godly upbringing by his mother! His mother was Jedidah who no doubt was a godly woman herself and she had a strong spiritual influence upon this young man, for he lived a righteous life before the Lord, did you notice what is said in 2 Kings 22:2, "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left." He followed the godly example of King David and never wavered aside to the right or to the left, but kept walking in THE WAY of God in that NARROW but godly way as he never deviating from God. Oh parents please remember that your actions, not so much your words, but your actions will have an influence upon your children. I mean when you really think about it, he was a king at age 8. Age 8 is an age that is easily influenced and he heard the voice of many and could have been easily persuaded in such a tender age, but his heart was in the GOD of his salvation!)

Since we saw the historical narrative from the writings of the Chronicles, I want to focus this morning in what is written also in the books of the Kings, 2 Kings 22 & 23. Please turn there. (Read and expound.) This is the life of the last godly of Judah who had a heart after King David and thus a heart after God.

Now, I find it ironic that we hardly read anything about King Josiah in Jeremiah. Most seem to think that the reason for this is because there was really no lasting effects or reform to this rebellious nation and perhaps also that King Josiah died somewhat unexpectedly. Many think he was foolish and went against God's will as he fought against Pharaoh Necho as he was trying to stop the Egyptians seeking to help the Assyrians against the growing power of the Babylonians. Now, I personally take the position that the Lord spared him all the heartache and pain he would have felt at the awful rebellion of his people against God, therefore the Lord took him home. 2 Kings 23:28-30, "*Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 29 In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him. 30 And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from*

Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead."

The next king under Jeremiah's preaching was (2) Jehoahaz, which made things worse and from here it was all downhill. We shall see that in the first chapters of Jeremiah that there was rabid wickedness as you read about unfaithfulness to God, wicked idolatry, adultery, the prophets and priests of the land prophesized falsely often saying peace, peace when there was no peace as they led the people astray, there was injustice and unrighteousness in the actions and lives of the people and so sad was the fact that nothing changed for the good. Sadder still was that Josiah's son was wicked and thus he only lasted 3 months. 2 Kings 23:31 & 32, *"Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done."*

There might have been no change in the hearts of the people but all around them things were changing rapidly. In 612 BC Assyria's capitol Nineveh fell to the Babylonians and from this point forward the Babylonians controlled whole area. Again, after Josiah was killed by the Pharaoh Necho Judah came under Egyptian control. Necho replaced him with Jehoahaz which lasted only 3 months. Then Necho replaced Jehoahaz with the third king under Jeremiah's preaching, Eliakim and he reigned from 609 -597 BC; whose name he changed to (3) Jehoiakim, 2 Kings 23:34-37, *"And Pharaohnechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there. 35 And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaohnechoh. 36 Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 37 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done."*

King Jehoiakim's heart was much different than his father Josiah's heart as he fiercely and wickedly resisted the messages and preaching of Jeremiah so much so that he burned a scroll that contained the prophet's word in Jeremiah 36. We already read this in our first introduction, but this must have been of the lowest times in the life of Jeremiah, that **GODLY KING JOSIAH'S** son King Jehoiakim refused to listen to the words of God and worse than that, **HE BURNED GOD'S WORD!** Scholars think that this event happened in 604 BC which marked as it were, "The point of no return" in the history of Judah. Judgment was inevitable and perhaps at this point Jeremiah felt no longer hopeful that Judah might repent and turn to the Living and True GOD as the enemy of the north was coming and would fulfill God's will and purpose!

In 605 BC the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians in the battle of Carchemish on the river Euphrates. Jehoiakim served the Babylonian's for about 3 years as a vassal but rebelled in 601 BC and notice what happened in 2 Kings 24:1-7, *"In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. 2 And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets. 3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; 4 And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon. 5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. 7 And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt."*

Jehoiakim's son (4) Jehoiachin became the fourth king under Jeremiah's preaching. In 597 BC Jehoiachin was taken captive along with the queen mother and many high ranking people. Many believe that in this captivity and exile the prophet Ezekiel was included and that in his upbringing he may have heard Jeremiah preached in the Temple at Jerusalem. 2 Kings 24:8-16, "*Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9 **And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.** 10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. 13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. 14 **And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.** 15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."*

Now, after this first exile of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar made another of Josiah's sons Mattaniah king of Judah. He would be the fifth and last king of Judah and last king under Jeremiah's preaching. Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to (5) Zedekiah. Now there is a sense that this king consulted Jeremiah, but he was so afraid of those officials watching him under King Nebuchadnezzar that he would not obey the prophet.

- Jeremiah 21:1-7
- Jeremiah 37:1-10; 17-20
- Jeremiah 38:14-27

He did not obey Jeremiah's words to submit to Nebuchadnezzar as the only way to save Jerusalem from being burned and destroyed completely. The result was that in 589BC Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar with awful catastrophic and devastating results. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar responded with violence and brutality. The sad thing is that because Jeremiah urged them to surrender they thought he was somehow collaborating with the enemy and was thrown in prison. Of course he was rescued by his only convert Ebed-melech in Jeremiah 37 & 38. After about an 18 month siege, Jerusalem finally fell to the Babylonians and sadly the city and the temple were destroyed and many Judeans were taken into exile 587/586 BC. Jeremiah 39:1-8, chapter 52 also and in 2 Kings 24:10-25:30 and 2 Chron.35:11 – 21 (Do read).

Amazing that not much is known about the end of Jeremiah's life and therefore the focus of the book is more upon God and HIS WORD rather than some biography on the prophet.

Let's conclude in chapter 39 as something always fascinates me when I read this chapter 1-18. A Gentile heathen king who has no regards for the Jews looks well after Jeremiah. Now excuse my ignorance but how Nebuchadnezzar knew of Jeremiah is beyond me, but what really fascinates me the most is to see this HEATHEN KING treated Jeremiah with respect and how sad when the world treats God's prophet, yea God's minister better than his own people! Read the end of this chapter 14-18 as it ends on a good note, amen and

AMEN!

The Dates of the Kings of Judah during Jeremiah's preaching:

640-609 B.C. Josiah's Reign, a godly king.

609 B.C. (3 mos) Jehoahaz reign 3 months, wicked king.

608-598 B.C. (11 yrs) Jehoiachim reign also a wicked king.

598-597 B.C. (3 mos) Jehoiachin a wicked king.

597-586 B.C. (11 yrs) Zedekiah's reign also a wicked king and also the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.