

## Lesson 4: Part Two Prophecies Delivered During The Reign Of Jehoiakim

### *Introductory comments*

1. Part two of this study considers the prophecies and work of Jeremiah that bear upon Jehoiakim, not a direct successor of Josiah but the next monarch who ruled for any length of time.
2. It is first necessary to remind ourselves of the changes that have taken place during and following the reign of Josiah.

### **The Historical Setting**

#### *Changes during Josiah's reign*

1. Jeremiah began his prophetic work in the thirteenth year of his reign (1:2).
2. Just prior to Josiah, Manasseh had ruled, the worst of the kings at least in terms of the consequences that his reign had for the people. As the record states: "Surely at the commandment of the LORD [this] came upon Judah, to remove [them] from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh..." (2 Ki 24:3). He introduced the idolatry and apostasy which led to the downfall of Judah.
3. Manasseh was succeeded by his son, Amon, who lasted 2 years and "did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done" (2 Ki 21:19-21).
4. Josiah 640/639-609 B.C. was the last of the reforming kings. He introduced stringent reforms throughout the length and breadth of Judah and Israel. This was made possible because the hitherto regionally dominant power of Assyria was waning. He was mortally wounded at Megiddo when he intercepted Pharaoh Necho who was marching to the aid of the Assyrian king in his struggles with the Medo-Persian alliance (2 Ki 23:29). The Egyptians were unable to prevent the Assyrians from being crushed at Haran (610-609).  
[www.britannica.com/place/Mesopotamia-historical-region-Asia/Ashurbanipal-668-627-and-Shamash-shum-ukin-668-648](http://www.britannica.com/place/Mesopotamia-historical-region-Asia/Ashurbanipal-668-627-and-Shamash-shum-ukin-668-648)
5. However, these reforms had only limited success. The people generally returned only outwardly to the Lord and on his death reverted to their old ways (Jer 3:10).

#### *After his death*

1. The people Placed Jehoahaz, son to Josiah, on the throne in his father's stead. He survived three months before being removed by the Egyptians (2 Ki 23:30-33). They tried to build up their influence and gain control over Palestine.
2. Pharaoh Necho installed Josiah's son, Eliakim and changed his name to Jehoiakim (2 ki 23:34). Jehoiakim reigned about eleven years (609-598).
3. Jehoiakim was succeeded by Jehoiachin who reigned just three months (2 Ki 24:8). Note that the dates, 598-597, are deceptive. The events must have happened over the close of one year and the beginning of the next.
4. Then followed Zedekiah, who ruled until the fall of Jerusalem in 586.
5. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the Babylonian king, Nabopolassar, sent his son, the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar, to dislodge Egypt from Syria and Palestine (Jer 25:1). Nebuchadnezzar soundly defeated the Egyptian army at Carchemish (605). Then he overtook the fleeing Egyptians near Hamath and dealt them an even more crushing blow. These decisive battles determined the destiny of the near eastern world for the next seventy years. They ended Egypt's hopes of empire and established Babylon as the master of Palestine and Syria. After victory at Carchemish the Babylonians swept south, their first appearance in Judah.

6. Initially, Jehoiakim submitted, the Babylonians taking several hostages. However, he revolted after three years in 601 (2 Ki 24:1) which was answered by a second invasion resulting in a larger number of captives, including Ezekiel, being taken 597. But by the time Nebuchadnezzar was able to respond Jehoiakim had died and been succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (2 Ki 24:8-16; Eze 1:1-3).

read://<https://www.britannica.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.britannica.com%2Fbiography%2FNebuchadnezzar-II>

7. Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, was enthroned by the Babylonian king (2 Ki 24:17), who in turn rebelled resulting in the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (586).

## **First Group Of Readings: Jer 22:13-19; 25; 26**

### *Introductory remarks*

1. As previously commented, this study is organised on the basis that chapters 1 through 20 deal with the reign of Josiah. 21:1 provides the first definite time marker since 3:6. Notice as we proceed that Jeremiah's habit was to date his later prophecies (25:1 for example).
2. From Chapter 21 the book presents prophecies from later times. These are not arranged in chronological order. The first of these (ch. 21) pertains to the siege of Jerusalem when Zedekiah reigned (21:1, 4; cf. 2 Ki 25).

### **R1:22:13-19 - Dealing with Jehoiakim's character.**

#### *Setting*

1. Chapter 22 contains prophetic observations with respect to:
  - Shallum/Jehoahaz (10-12). Shallum is named but comparison with 2 Kings 23:31-34 shows them to be the same. Jehoahaz succeeded Josiah only to reign three months before he was taken away captive by Pharaoh Necho to Egypt, never to return to his homeland. His identity is clinched by the listing of Josiah's sons in 1 Chronicles 3:15. Here the name "Shallum" is mentioned but Jehoahaz omitted.
  - Jehoiakim (13-19; note 18).
  - Jehoiachin (20-39; note 24, 28 where Jehoiachin is called "Coniah").
2. The chapter opens with a threat of destruction if justice is not practised (1-9).

#### *Notes on passage*

1. Woe pronounced upon Jehoiakim (13-15).
  - This king's end would be worse than that of Shallum (cf. 18-19 with 10-12).
  - Not content with what existed, He built himself a magnificent palace using forced and unpaid labourers (13-14).
  - Kingcraft did not consist in constructing magnificent palaces (15). Jehoiakim was challenged, "Shall you reign because you enclose yourself in cedar?"
2. The behaviour of Josiah and Jehoiakim contrasted (16-17). Josiah dispensed justice to the poor and needy and it was well with him (16). On the other hand, Jehoiakim exploited and mistreated the people; his sole concern was the accumulation of wealth (17).
3. Therefore, he would have a most ignominious end; Unmourned even by his family and not accorded the respect of a proper burial but cast beyond the walls of the city like a donkey (18-19).

### **R2: Ch. 25 - about the 70 years**

#### *Prediction of Babylon's Seventy-Year Domination of Judah and the Surrounding Nations (1-11)*

1. The prophecy dated (1-2).
  - This is the first of Jeremiah's prophecies to be dated so specifically - the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar (1). Others are dated more generally and without such precision (e.g. 3:6; 26:1).

- Why so? This was an extremely important year. It was the year which marked a notable turning point in the fortunes of Judah. It was the year of the Battle of Carchemish (605), the decisive battle in which Babylon dealt Egypt a crushing defeat (46:2). That battle determined the future of this region for the next seventy years. It ended Egypt's hopes of empire (2 Ki 23:29-24:7) and established Babylon as the master of the ancient world. After Carchemish, the Babylonians swept south and invaded Judah for the first time, taking some captives including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariahto to Babylon (Dan 1:1-7). What this passage demonstrates is that from an early stage Jeremiah understood the significance of the battle of Nations would be left reeling and staggering like a drunkard.
- Apparent contradiction between Dan 1:1 and Jer 25:1. Two possible explanations: 1) Daniel refers to the commencement of the military campaign and Jeremiah the time of arrival in Judah (Gill). 2) perhaps Daniel's dating followed the accession method used by the Babylonians. With this, the accession year of a king was counted separately rather than being treated as the first year of the reign.  
<https://history.stackexchange.com/questions/58535/why-did-babylonians->

2. For twenty-three years Jeremiah, as well as others, had delivered the same message but this had gone unheeded (3-7).
3. Therefore, the time had come for these threats to be enacted (8-10).
4. The period of desolation and service specified - seventy years (11; Cf. 2 Chron 36:20-23; Ezra 1:1-2; Dan 9:1-2).

#### *Prediction of the Fall of Babylon (12-14)*

1. The king of Babylon to be punished (12). The Babylonians were God's servants to act against Judah (9), but their intent was not to serve God but to build an empire for selfish passion. They therefore were accounted guilty and would be punished.
2. The Babylonians would face enslavement just as they had enslaved others (13-14).

#### *The Cup of God's Wrath (15-26)*

1. This cup was to be drunk by Judah (17-18), other nations (19-25) concluding with the kings of the north (26).
2. The figure is used widely in the scriptures (Psa 60:3; Isa 51:17, 22-23; Jer 13:12-14; 48:26; 49:12; 51:7; Rev 14:10 etc.). Nations would be left reeling and staggering like a drunkard but drunk on God's wrath.
3. How was this instruction to be executed? Was there actual symbolic action as in Jeremiah 25:1-11? Was Jeremiah to physically dispense cups of wine? The number of nations involved makes this unlikely. Probably the action was carried out in a vision. Jeremiah in this, would have dispensed cups to the various representatives of the nations. This vision then was transformed into reality in Jeremiah's work as he prophesied the doom of those involved (cf. v. 13 with chs 46-51).

#### *The Message to Accompany the Cup (27-29)*

With the exchange of a sword for a cup, symbol becomes reality. If this falls upon the city "which is called by my name", says God, then others will not escape.

#### *The fearsomeness of Jehovah's Controversy with the nations (30-31)*

#### *Description of the World Judgment (32-38)*

#### *R3: ch. 26 - Jeremiah threatened with death*

#### *Jeremiah's address in the court of the Temple (1-6)*

1. Although the word came "In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim" (1), it was not necessarily before the seventy-year prophecy (ch. 25). It was said of Hananiah that he spoke to Jeremiah in the middle of Zedekiah's reign but this was still described as "at the beginning" (28:1). The point to be emphasized is that the message was delivered when judgement was near.

2. "Perhaps..." (2-3). Likely this occurred shortly after the prophecy of ch. 25. Then the invasion having taken place, the people might be more receptive to Jeremiah's words!
3. The message (4-6). If you do not obey my law and take heed to the prophets, I have repeatedly sent to you, then I will make this house like Shiloh and the city a curse. Shiloh was the site in Israel where the Tabernacle was first erected upon entrance into Canaan (Josh 18:1). The historical books do not recount its destruction but there are allusions to it. Probably Shiloh was overrun after the Philistines' victory and the Ark's capture (1 Sam 4). (See lesson 2 for more details).

*The reaction of the priests, prophets and all the people (7-9)*

1. Notice that it was the priests, prophets and the people who seized Jeremiah as opposed to the princes.
2. Death was the penalty that the law prescribed for those who presumed to speak what God had not commanded (8; cf. Dt 18:20). Jeremiah responded that if they did take his life they would bring upon themselves the guilt of shedding innocent blood because the Lord had commanded him to say these things (15).

*The prophet on trial (10-24)*

1. A court convened, the charge made, Jeremiah's defence stated and the prophet vindicated by the people and the princes (10-16). "Officials" as in ESV is probably a better translation - government representatives rather than the princes.
2. Two cases advanced to argue what should be done with Jeremiah (17-23).
  - Verses 17 through 23 recount the arguments put forward by certain elders before the verdict of v. 16 was reached. This is the most likely explanation even though it requires that the telling of events was not in chronological order. This in itself is not a conclusive factor because this is often the case in the book of Jeremiah from ch. 21 onwards (see John Calvin's commentary). However, there were differing opinions, with some arguing one thing and others another.
  - The case of Micah (17-19). One group setting forth Micah as a precedent argued that Jeremiah should not be put to death. They combined the prophet's prediction of hard times (Mic 3:12) with the historical facts set out in 2 Kings chs. 18 through 19.
  - The case of Uriah (20-23). Now others put forward an alternative example, closer in time, in opposition to the first illustrating the attitude of the present king. He preached against Jerusalem and the land, but Jehoiakim killed him. Remember that in his early years Jehoiakim was vassal to Egypt.
3. The account concludes with an explanation as to why Jeremiah was released - the hand of Ahikam was with him (24). Here is another lesson on God's providential workings:
  - Ahikam had been an official in Josiah's government (2 Ki 22:12-13). This meant that during Jehoiakim's reign, some officials remained who had been under the influence of this reforming king. He was willing to stand-up for Jeremiah and so God was able to use him to preserve the life of the prophet.
  - However, after the second Babylonian invasion of 597 (2 Ki 24:8, 14-16), a vast number of the population were removed including the governmental figures so that during Zedekiah's reign those sympathetic to Jeremiah's words had been removed (2 Ki 24:8-16). This is an important distinction to notice between the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah.
4. Changing attitudes. With the death of Josiah, the barriers that had stood against idolatry and apostasy had fallen. In his days Jeremiah could speak God's words relatively unhindered. But now in the person of Jehoiakim a monarch reigned who would do all that he could to kill Jeremiah as he did Uriah. He was only prevented by the influence of Ahikam and others who perhaps survived Josiah.