

STUDIES FROM THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

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Studies From The Book Of Jeremiah (Part I.)

Lesson 1: Jeremiah's Call And God's Case Against Israel

Introductory Material

A. The objectives of the study.

1. More than any other, Jeremiah was the prophet associated with the decline and fall of Jerusalem.
2. His name signifies, "the Lord shall exalt," or "be exalted"; or "exalting the Lord" (Gill).
3. He was a priest in Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin, receiving his prophetic call in the thirteenth year of King Josiah in 628/627 BC, continuing his work till the eleventh year of Zedekiah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 (Jer 1:1-3; Josh 21:8).
4. Serving as he did, under several kings and a variety of conditions, this study will be organised according to the major political periods. It is not a verse-by-verse examination of the text but rather different passages have been selected to bring out the major developments. Note also that the approach and much of the material has been drawn from L.A. Mott's study guide and so direct quotes will not be attributed.
5. It has been pointed out that 1:2 and 3:6 of Jeremiah refers to activity of the prophet during the time of Josiah. Chapters 1 through 6 contain prophecies delivered while Josiah was king (3:6) and the next specific indication of time is not given till 21:1. This would suggest that everything between 1:2 and 21:1, i.e., the first 20 chapters, occurred during the reign of Josiah unless something specific in the text requires otherwise. Commentators do not share this view but we must come to our own conclusions based on our personal study. The material here is organised accordingly.
6. The objectives are to gain a better understanding in two primary areas. Firstly, Jeremiah's position in the history of God's people and secondly, of God's purposes in the management of world affairs.
7. All quotations are taken from the New King James Version unless stated otherwise.

B. Josiah's reforms

Background

1. Josiah was the last of the good kings of Judah, doing "[what was] right in the sight of the LORD" walking "in all the ways of his father David." (2Ki 22:1-3). Coming to the throne aged eight, he reigned 31 years.
2. Actions tracked by years (2 Chron 34:1-15):
From eighth, he began to seek the Lord, aged about 15 (3).
In twelfth began to purge Judah and Israel of idolatrous places of worship (3-7).
Jeremiah called to office in thirteenth (Jer 1:2).
In 18th repaired/cleansed Temple, in process of which the book of the Law was found (8, 14).
3. The state of the nation's religious corruption can best be seen by the extent and depth of the measures the king took to irradicate it (2 Chron 34:3-7; 8-13; 2 Ki 23:4-20).

Josiah's reactions to God's pronouncement (2 Chron 34:19-33).

1. When he heard the words of the Law he tore his clothes and sent instructions to Hilkiah to enquire of the Lord (19-21).
2. Word came back from Huldah (23) that God would "bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah" (24) but "... your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants" (28).

3. The king gathered the people together, read the Law in their presence, renewed the covenant in their name, caused them to pledge themselves to its keeping and made an even stronger effort to rid the land of all the elements of its idolatrous practices - the spiritualism, witchcraft, and false prophets/prophetesses (29-33).
4. Notwithstanding the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath "because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him" (2Ki 23:24-26). Judgement was not averted, only delayed (27).
5. The limitation of these reforms.
 - They were only external and did not change the hearts of the people. There was an appearance of a return to God but their hearts were not converted. They worshipped the Lord in pretence and reverted back to idolatry on Josiah's death (Jer 3:6-10).
 - Jeremiah was no doubt in favour of these reforms though he is not mentioned in the historical books until his lamentation at Josiah's death (2 Chron 35:25). Beginning his ministry in the thirteenth year of the king's reign, thus one year after their commencement he recognised their weakness. His assignment was to work on the hearts of the people.

Part One

During The Reign Of Josiah

First Reading: Jeremiah Chapter 1 - Call To Prophetic Office

The Background for Jeremiah is found in 2 Kings 22-25 and 2 Chronicles 33-36.

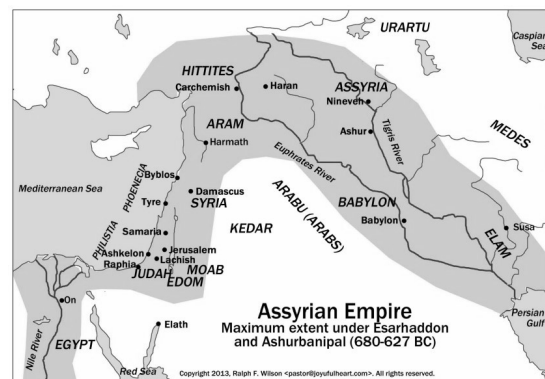
A. Historical setting (1-3)

The kings of the time.

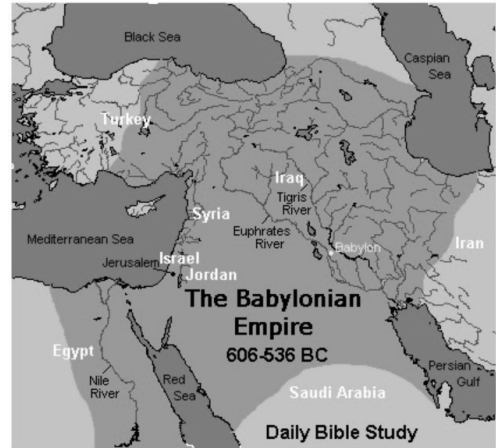
1. Manasseh 687/86–643/42 (2 Ki 21:1-18; 2 Chron 33:1-21). After the death of Hezekiah Manasseh led the people astray to a depth of evil beyond that of the displaced Canaanite nations (2 Ki 21:10). His repentance and reformation had no lasting effect upon the nation and probably this accounts for it not being recorded in Kings.
2. Ammon 643-42. His son succeeded and reigned two years before being assassinated. He forsook the Lord and re-built the altars demolished by Manasseh (2 Ki 21:19-26). Against this background not even the reforms of Josiah could save the nation.
3. Josiah 641/640-609.
4. Jehoahaz (sometimes Shallum; Jer 22:11; 1 Chron 3:15).
5. Jehoiakim 609–598.
6. Jehoiachin (Coniah Jer 22:24) 598–597.
7. Zedekiah 597–586.

International affairs

Assyria experienced a rapid decline during the reign of Josiah. In 612 BC a Medo-Babylonian coalition took the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. The Assyrian king with the remnants of his army withdrew and attempted a last stand in northern Mesopotamia. Pharaoh-Neco of Egypt who was trying to regain Palestine and Syria for Egypt evidently thought it would be advantageous for Egypt to have the greatly weakened Assyria survive as a buffer between Egypt and Babylon. In 609 BC he took his armies into northern Mesopotamia to support Assyria against the Medes and Babylonians. Note the RSV, NKJV and NASV translations of 2 Kings 23:29. Josiah, perhaps to keep Palestine out of Egyptian hands, attempted to head the Egyptians off at Megiddo. Josiah was killed, but Egypt was not able to prevent Assyria from being finally crushed at Haran by the Medo-Babylonian alliance.



After Josiah's death, Judah was briefly dominated by Egypt (2 Ki 23:31-35). But in 605 BC Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon administered a crushing defeat to Egypt in the Battle of Carchemish (cf. Jer 46:2-12). That decisive battle determined that Babylon, not Egypt, would be the power to dominate the ancient near eastern world for the next seventy years. Jeremiah understood the significance of Carchemish and advised Judah and the surrounding nations to submit to Babylon (Jer 25:8-9, 27). But Judah vacillated between Babylon and Egypt and wove a web of political intrigue which would be the immediate cause of its destruction.



B. The prophet's call (1:4-10).

The Lord's opening words (5-6)

1. "A prophet to the nations" (5; Ex 4:16).
2. The message Jeremiah was to carry would be opposed from the beginning.
 - The false prophets would cry "peace, peace" when there was no peace (8:11; 23:16-18; 28:1-11) and cause the jews to deny that he spoke on God's behalf saying "You speak falsely! The LORD our God has not sent you to say..." (43:2).
 - They sought to take his life (26:8-9; 37:11-15; 38:4) including his acquaintances (20:7-21:1).
3. Though others would deny it, Jeremiah must be absolutely convinced from the outset of his commission, that he was to be God's spokesman.
4. It was with the intention of bolstering Jeremiah's belief that he was told, "before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (1:5).
5. God chose Jeremiah in the same way that he chose Jacob Rom 9:10-13; John the Baptist (Lk 1:13, 15-17) Saul (Gal 1:15-16) to be instruments in the accomplishment of different facets of His purpose. This does not require that those involved had no choice in the matter.
 - Paul did not think that the fact that he was chosen to be an apostle guaranteed his salvation (1 Cor 9:24-27).
 - Foresight does not eliminate individual free-will. Illustration.

Jeremiah's reaction and God's response (6-10)

1. "Behold, I cannot speak, for I [am] a youth" (6; cf. Gen 14:24; 34:19 where same Hebrew used). He argued a lack of maturity and wisdom associated with greater years.
2. God's response (7-10).
 - Just go where I send and say what I command (7).
 - Do not be afraid for I am with you (8). He had to take the step of faith and obey; his adversaries were strong and would reject the message but he was not to "diminish a word" delivering it in its entirety (26:2).
 - The Lord touched his mouth, likely in a vision (9; cf. Eze 2:8-3:3; Dan 10:16) and that day "set" him "over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down ..." (10). The Hebrew "over the nations" elsewhere rendered "overseer" (Gen 39:4-5) and "governor" (Jer 40:5, 7). This authority was exercised on God's behalf as His representative; His word was not to no effect but like a "fire," and "a hammer which shatters a rock NASV" (23:29).

Two visions designed to Reassure and confirm regarding the charge (11-16)

The branch of an almond tree (11-12).

1. This provided the certainty that a spokesman of God would need as he began his work.

2. The lesson of the vision turns upon the almond tree being the first to put out blooms; it means the "early awake tree" (Coffman).
3. It represents Jehovah and His attitude towards his word. He will be continually watching to ensure that it happens.

The boiling pot (13-16). As the first rested upon its certainty, this second does upon the content of the message.

1. Jeremiah saw a pot boiling on a fire which was tilted away from the north, the implication being that it was poised to pour its scalding contents from this direction (13).
2. This symbolised disaster which Jehovah was going to send from the peoples of the northern kingdoms (14-16). To the objection that Babylon was not geographically to the north of Judah Coffman points out quoting from Herodotus: "Strictly speaking, the Babylonians were an eastern people from the point of view in Palestine; but the caravan-roads which the Chaldean armies had to take entered Palestine at Dan and then proceeded southward."
3. The fulfilment recorded (Jer 39:1-4).

The command and assurance of Divine help (1:17-19)

1. Jeremiah's only hope (17).
2. The Lord's protection (18-19). "I have made you this day A fortified city and an iron pillar, And bronze walls against the whole land ..."

Second Reading: Jeremiah 2:1-3:5 - God's Case Against Israel

Introductory comments

1. 2:1-2 would suggest that this speech followed on from Jeremiah's commissioning in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (1:1-2) and so approx. one year after the commencement of the religious reformation.
2. They were, of course, first delivered orally and only afterwards put into written form (111)
3. As Jeremiah began, he confronted a people which denied their guilt (23, 35) and complained against Jehovah about the chastisements brought upon it (29-30). Jeremiah's task was to set forth Jehovah's indictment of the nation in an effort to convict the people of their sin. That is the burden of this first speech.

The devotion of Israel's youth (2:1-3).

1. This has reference to the early history of Israel - the later sojourn in Egypt before entering a covenant relationship at Sinai (2).
2. "Israel [was] holiness to the LORD, The firstfruits of His increase" (3). The firstfruits were not for common use but to be given to the Lord (Ex 23:19; Lev 23:10-14; Num 18:12-13). As with the firstfruits, "All who ate of it became guilty; Evil came upon them ..." (3 NAS). Consider the destruction of the Amalekites as an example (Ex 17:8-16).

Israel's defection from its Divine benefactor (2:4-8).

1. Israel, including those taken into captivity, were challenged to name any injustice in the Lord which would justify their desertion (4-5).
2. God in Israel's journey to Mt. Sinai had tenderly led Israel through innumerable dangers and difficulties to a land of plenty so what had gone wrong (6-7).
3. Jeremiah cited four groups of people as being culpable- the priests, Levites, leaders, and prophets (8).

Israel's apostasy held up for examination (2:9-13)

1. This was Astonishing and Unprecedented. Kittom came to represent Cyprus and Kedar "the home of Bedouin tribes in the Syro-Arabian desert" (NIV footnotes) 2.10; and so go west or east and you won't see such a thing (9-10; cf. Eze 27:6).
2. Coffman observes "... They had deserted the true God and gone after Baal. Furthermore, in all history it was never heard of that even a pagan nation would forsake its ancestral gods!" (10-11)
3. The heavens were called upon to register their horror (13).
4. Two sins identified (13).

The bitter consequences of Israel's course (2:14-19).

1. A slave was treated like a possession of another and was treated accordingly. Israel was not a slave but was overrun by other nations as if she belonged to them (14).
2. Details of this maltreatment (15-16).
3. V. 17 answers the earlier question (14); Israel had brought it on herself.
4. Israel's reactions to the self-inflicted troubles was to seek help from foreign nations (17-18). The reference to Egypt does not demand a later date since overtures were made during Isaiah's time (e.g., Isa 30:1-3, 7; 31:1-3; 36:5-6, 9).
5. Judah to be punished as a result of her own manoeuvrings (19).

Illustrations of Israel's passion for idolatry mixed with denial (2:20-28).

1. Israel had long ago broken her yoke (2:20a). "Note that the ASV margin preserves the reading, thou hast which rendering is supported by the RSV and ISV. This sense better suits the context. As has been commented, "The harlotry, or whoredom, was both literal in the sexually oriented worship of Baal, and spiritual in the people's abandonment of Jehovah for other gods." Supplied is a list of seven similes illustrating Israel's apostasy.
2. The similes (20-28). (Adapted from Coffman).

An ox that throws off the yoke and refuses to work (20a).

A prostitute (20b).

The choice grapevine that became a degenerate shoot of a foreign vine (21).

Israel's guilt, a stain that neither lye nor soap can remove (22). Is this a reference to Josiah's reforms?

A she-camel in rut, running around in all directions seeking a mate (23).

A she-ass in heat, crazed by desire, seeking a male partner (24-25).

Israel's shame - like that of an apprehended thief (2:26-28).

3. Israel's denial in the face of the evidence (23). "How can you say, 'I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals?'" Said not explicitly but by their response to Jeremiah's preaching. It reveals the hopelessness of the prophet's mission; the nation was determined to persevere in apostasy and would not listen to any plea to desist.

Israel's guilt, in spite of its denial (2:29-37).

1. The nation's rejection of correction (29-30).
2. God's treatment provided no grounds for desertion (31).
3. The unnaturalness of forgetting God (32).
4. Exclamation at the extent to which Israel would go to practise idolatry, here in the figure of love (33).
5. Guilty of openly shedding innocent blood, yet her culminating sin was the stubborn protestation of innocence despite all these things (34-35).

6. Though they express feelings of safety (35a), Israel sought protection through foreign alliances - Assyria (2 Ki 16:7-9) and perhaps Egypt (36) but they would not prosper (37).

Conclusion Of The Discourse: Jehovah's call to repentance and Israel's response (3:1-5).

1. Despite Israel's faithlessness, Jehovah pleads "yet return again" (1)

- This rendering has the support of the ASV but many of the translations render it as a question.
- Admittedly 3:6 would indicate the commencement of a different speech but the sense of pleading would align with v. 7 and 12-13 provided Judah fully repented.

2. The evidence of harlotry (2)

- The "desolate" or "bare heights" refers to the places of idolatrous worship (Hos 4:13).
- "As the Arabian... The freebooting propensities of the Bedouin had passed in ancient times into a proverb. As eager as the desert-tribes were for plunder, so was Israel for idolatry" (Barnes).

3. Disciplinary measures imposed too no effect (3)

4. Judah's response to Jehovah's invitation (4-5)

- "From this time" may refer to the time of the drought (3:3) or that of the reformation (4).
- Judah response to the call for a return, with a return in appearance only (5).

Questions

1. Where was Jeremiah when he was called?
2. What was his mission?
3. What assurances was he given? How might these help us?

Studies From The Book Of Jeremiah (Part I.)

Lesson 2: The Rejection Of Israel And The Way of Salvation

First Group Of Readings: Jer 3:6-10; 5:1-9; 6:1-30

Introductory Remarks

1. These first three readings are taken from chapters 3 through 6 and have to do with God's rejection of Israel.
2. Hopefully the breakdown below will facilitate a better grasp of the unit as a whole.

Outline:

- I. The rejection of impenitent Israel (3:6-6:30).
 - A. The required Change of Heart necessary for the nation's Salvation and the Fulfilment of its Destiny (3:6-4:4).
 - B. God's Burning Wrath Which Will Consume Judah in the Absence of Repentance (4:5-31).
 - C. The Outcome of the Period of Testing--the Rejection of a Worthless People (6:1-30).

Reading 1: Israel's rejection ignored by Judah (3:6-10).

1. Israel here (6) refers to the ten northern tribes of the north. Because of her faithlessness, she had been taken into captivity by Assyria, Samaria falling in 722 B.C. and so about 100 years earlier. In contrast Judah has reference to the two remaining tribes of the south, Jerusalem being her capital.
2. Judah failed to take note of this warning and continued in religious harlotry (6-7). On reaching a degree of independence (aged about nineteen), Josiah sought to purge the land of idolatry.
3. The speech exposed Judah's delusory sense of security. She took Israel's whoredoms lightly and her return was in pretence only, idolatry remained in her heart (9-10).

R. 2: Judah's obstinacy and corruption made pardon impossible (5:1-9).

Corruption and rebellion existed in all classes (1-5)

1. "'Run to and fro
"If there is [anyone] who executes judgment... And I will pardon her" (1; Gen 18:22-33).
2. "Though they take the most binding form of oath, they do so only as a means of deceiving others" (Barnes on v. 2).
3. Faithfulness was the chief attribute that God sought but despite chastening none was to be found in Judah (3).
4. The disregard of truth and law existed in both the poor and the leaders (4-5).

The necessary punishment (6-9)

Judah had forsaken Jehovah for false gods. Despite being well provided for, they had committed adultery, both spiritual and physical. Why should I, asked God, not punish them?

R. 3: The outcome of the testing - the rejection of a worthless people (6:1-30).

Graphic portrayal of approaching attack on Jerusalem as warning to the people (1-8)

Such warnings going unheeded, God's wrath must be poured out (9-15)

1. "Their houses ... fields ... everyone is given to covetousness..." (12-13). Compare the order of listing (Dt 5:21). The people had been greedy so they must suffer the loss of all things.

2. They had treated the wound of the people “slightly” (14; Cf. Eze 13:10). Like a doctor who prescribes paracetamol for gangrene.

The fruit of such stubbornness and hardness of heart—a judgment which cannot be averted By unrepentant Sacrifice (16-21)

1. Jehovah had not left the people without guidance (16). He had sent various messengers to direct the people back to the old paths. Then when that had been rejected, He sent prophets to sound a warning. But they were deaf to all efforts to help (17).
 - They had forsaken the old/ancient paths and the side-lanes they had chosen were leading to calamity (18:15-17).
 - “Ask... where is the good way?” (16) Note the appeals of Moses to the Israelites to walk in the ways marked out by Jehovah so that they might live and prosper in Canaan (Dt 5:33; 8:6; 10:12-13; 11:22-25; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9).
2. The people being resistant, God explains to the nations what he will do (18-19).
3. In the face of such rebellion sacrifices will be to no purpose (20). Rather God will lay stumbling blocks before them, explained in the next verses.

The nature of Judah's Enemy Calls for Bitter Lamentation (6:22-26).

1. The sound of their approach - like a roaring sea (23).
2. The terror that would spread through the land by their approach (24-25).
3. *Call for mourning at what lay ahead (26).*

The outcome of Judah's time of trial - a rejected people (27-30)

1. These verses provide a basis for understanding Jeremiah's work among the nation and explain why the destroyer must come. He was to be a tester set out in the figure of an assayer who would test ore for the presence of gold or silver. However the prophet was to “know and test their way.” In this role he would be exposed to the venom of the people but God would make him an impregnable “fortress” (27).
2. Jeremiah found them to be stubborn rebels, walking as slanderers and corrupters (28). Continuing the metaphor, they were the relatively inferior metals of brass and iron compared to silver (27, 30; cf. Eze 22:18).
3. The metallurgic comparison is continued with reference to smelting (29). As an intense effort to separate the baser metals using lead proves vain, so the preaching of Jeremiah failed to draw off the wicked.
4. Those observing will call them “rejected” silver because the Lord had “rejected” them (30). So the period of trial finding them wanting, Judah must be destroyed.

Second Group of Readings: Jeremiah 7:1-15; 10:17-25

Introductory Comments

1. The next Major section of the book deals with the way of salvation (chapters 7-10).
2. Judah was deluded about this as shown in the first reading. Jeremiah insisted that the only way of salvation is through the knowledge of the true God. But Judah refused to know Jehovah (cf. 9:3, 6). Therefore the nation faced a devastating Judgment. In the second reading we see the lesson which would be taught by the calamity to come upon Judah. The lesson which they refused to learn in any other way, would be forced upon them through that disaster.

An outline of the unit:

- I. The way of salvation
 - A. Warning against a false trust in the temple and the sacrificial service (7:1-8:3).
 - B. The stubborn and foolish commitment to apostasy which brought Judah to ruin (8:4-9:1).

C. Judah: a people destroyed for lack of knowledge (9:2-11).

D. The wisdom attained through judgment (9:12-10:25).

R. 4: The false security felt by Judah (Jer 7:1-15).

Repentance and reform - Judah's only hope to remain (1-7).

1. The message was delivered at the gate of the Temple (1).
2. He warned "Amend your ways and your doings (says God), and I will cause you to dwell in this place" (3).
3. They violated God's law and served other gods but believed that the Temple was the surety for their safety. It was the sanctuary of God and the place of His presence and so no matter what evil they did, as long as it stood they would be able to remain in the land (4). Hence in Micah's time the false prophets argued "is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us" (Mic 3:11). They had a superstitious regard toward the Temple as did their forefathers towards the Ark believing that it would ward off harm (1 Sam 4:4-5).
4. This was delusionary; the only safeguard was godly living (5-7).

The delusion of false trust amplified (8-11)

Behaving in this way was to place trust in deceptive words (8).

2. Jeremiah asked two questions (9-11):

- Do you believe that you can commit these sins –stealing, murder, adultery, swear falsely, serve Baal etc. – "And [then] come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations?'" (9-10).
- "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den (m'arah) of thieves in your eyes?" With the warning "Behold, I, even I, have seen [it], says the LORD" (11). "M'arah" is defined by Vine as "a cave or cavern, used especially as a hiding place or dwelling for wild animals." The Jews saw it as a place of refuge from the consequences of their sins. They would steal, murder, commit adultery and worship other gods thinking that they could then offer their sacrifices and be forgiven.

The delusion exposed by a reference to Shiloh (12-15)

1. Shiloh was the site in Israel where the Tabernacle was first erected upon entrance into Canaan (Josh 18:1; Judges 18:31; 21:12, 19; 1 Sam 1:3, 9; 2:14; 3:21; 4:3-4). The historical books do not recount its destruction but there are allusions to it (Jer 26:6; Psa 78:60). Probably Shiloh was overrun after the Philistines' victory and the Ark's capture (1 Sam 4). The Tabernacle was at Nob during Saul's reign (1 Sam 21).
2. God would do to the Temple what He had done to Shiloh and as Ephraim had been removed, so would they (14-15). The sacredness of a place would not save it from destruction if sin was practised there.

R 5: The great lesson of judgment and captivity (10:17-25).

Call to prepare for exile (17-18)

1. "Gather up your wares from the land, O inhabitant of the fortress!"
 - It is essential in this passage to be aware of the different renderings since the NASV and ESV for example give the impression that those addressed are living under siege at the time of the speech. More likely Jeremiah anticipates what will be (cf. 22).
 - ASV marginal note says the Hebrew is "inhabitant of the fortress."
2. The reason - "Behold, I will throw out at this time The inhabitants of the land, And will distress them, That they may find [it so]" (18).

The response of the people to Their fate (19-25)

1. A humbled people anticipated (19-22).

- The speaker here is the inhabitress of Jerusalem (cf. 18). The inhabitants of Jerusalem are represented as a woman who bemoans her fate (19-20).

- main cause of the disaster are the "shepherds" who failed to enquire of the Lord and relied on human wisdom to plot their course (21).

- Confirmation that this passage anticipates what is to come (22).

The great lesson (23-25)

1. Jeremiah continuing to speak on behalf of the people expresses the great truth that they had learned. Control of human affairs is not in man. They had followed their leaders, ignored God's counsel and the result was the city's destruction and exile. They had also learned "[It is] not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (23).

2. Entreaty for mitigation in correction and for God's wrath to be poured out upon her enemies (24-25).

Questions

1. What were the weaknesses in Josiah's reforms?

2. Why did judgement have to come upon Judah?

3. What was Judah's delusion?

Studies From The Book Of Jeremiah (Part I.)

Lesson 3: Jeremiah, The Man

Readings: Jer 9:1-6; 11:18-12:6; 15:10-21; ch. 20

These passages all relate to the man and his experiences during the reign of Josiah. The lesson will take a different form than normal. During the class we will read as many of these passages as possible. With the reading I might draw attention to the passage context or some specific points that may not be immediately apparent. Please think about the three questions at the bottom and be ready to contribute to the answers at the close of the reading.

R1: 9:1-6

1. Overview: Jeremiah first laments over the coming judgement (1), then anguishes over the wickedness of his nation (2-6).
2. "Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears..." (1). A wish on the part of the prophet that his head might become a reservoir of water that he might weep abundantly. He wants to get away from them all and yearns: "Oh, that I had in the wilderness A lodging place for travelers; That I might leave my people, And go from them!" (2)
3. Their tongues are metaphorically spoken of as "bows" ready to shoot lies (3).

R2: 11:18-12:6

Context.

1. It is set against the background of a general conspiracy in which the people deliberately rejected their covenantal obligations (11:9-10).
2. The apostasy is explained in a couple of ways: Either the plotting was so widespread that it appeared to be of an organised character or that those hostile to Josiah's reformation had entered into a formal pact.

A Plot Against Jeremiah's Life (11:18-23).

1. But for the Lord's intervention Jeremiah would not have realised that the open threats had coalesced into schemes to kill him (18-19; cf. 21).
2. Jeremiah takes his cause to Jehovah (20-23).
3. Chapter 12 deals with a complaint against the prosperity of the wicked.

Jeremiah's complaint (12:1-4)

1. He was perplexed to see the wicked prosper (1-2) and the innocent suffer (4). This bewilderment caused him to look to God for answers but not reject Him in despair.
2. Jeremiah does not doubt God's justice but wants it to be executed speedily. Barnes comments concerning "pull them out" that "the original is used (Jer 10:20) of the rending asunder of the cords of the tent."

Jehovah's Answer (12:5-17)

1. God begins in a surprising way - Things are only going to get worse (5-6). He corrects J's impatience using two proverbs:
 - The confrontation with prosperity in wickedness was an ordinary trial, a mere "running with the footmen."
 - "If you fall down in a land of peace, How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan? (NASV)"
 - A warning against treachery in his own family (6).

2. Judah given up to judgement (7-13).

- The reluctance with which this is done (7-9)
- the desolation and misery that will be brought upon the land by the plunderers (10-12).
- A conclusion to 7-12. All the peoples' labours will be ineffective (13).

3. God's plans (14-17).

- Judah's enemies as well as Judah to be uprooted from the land (14).
- After a period of time, they will be restored provided they learn God's ways (15-16). Some see in this the description of conversion to faith in Christ and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 22:18).
- However, if they do not obey, they will be utterly destroyed (17).

R3: 15:10-21

Background of text

The passage continues a dialogue with Jehovah beginning 14:1 in which the emphasis shifts from the situation of the people to that of Jeremiah. The beleaguered prophet is here encouraged to continue his work.

Jeremiah's outburst of vexation (10)

He had not lent to or borrowed from any man, such transactions being a constant source of strife. His present situation arose from the faithful discharge of his office.

Jehovah's Answer: A Word of Encouragement (11-14)

1. "The LORD said, Surely I will set you free for [purposes of] good; Surely I will cause the enemy to make supplication to you In a time of disaster and a time of distress" (11 NASV). While the people would go into captivity, Jeremiah would be set free (39:11-14; 40:1-6).
2. Jeremiah was asked the question, "Can a man break iron?" And so, Judah would not be able to resist the overwhelming power from the north.
3. God would cause the wealth of the nation to pass into the hands of their conquerors (13-14).

Jeremiah's plea on his own behalf (15-18)

1. This is a man in bitter grief struggling to deal with the Divine will. He ask that when the time came he should not be carried away with the other captives (15).
2. After recounting his faithful service (16-17), Jeremiah's hopes seem not to have been realised (18).

God's response - an encouraging reply (19-21)

1. In the midst of these doubts J is assured that (19):
 - If he returned either to the Lord or perhaps to the work which he was sometimes tempted to forsake (9:2; 20:7-18) then God would restore him.
 - If he took out the precious from the vile, then he would be as God's mouth.
2. Assurance of protection provided Jeremiah acted as he was encouraged.

R4: 20:1-18

Setting

1. In Jeremiah's last speech, he had prophesied of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem that was to come (19:1-9), followed by a symbolic representation of the totality of this destruction by the smashing of a potter's earthen vessel (19:10-13). From the valley of the son of Hinnom, he returns to the Temple court where he pronounces judgement before the people of Jerusalem and Judah (14-15).

2. This chapter recounts its results. He was beaten and imprisoned. His enemies had previously plotted against him but to this point had done him little bodily harm.

Persecutions and the Message Against the Persecutor (1-6)

1. Pashhur, who was chief officer in the house of Jehovah "struck", "beat (ESV)" Jeremiah or "had Jeremiah the prophet beaten (NASV)" (2) and put in the stocks.
2. "Magor-missabib. "That is Terror on every side" (ASV marg.)
3. He was among those who had "prophesied lies" (6).

Jeremiah's Bitter Complaint, Followed by an Expression of Confidence in Jehovah (7-13)

1. He felt that he had been "induced" or "deceived (NASV)" into a work that he had not wanted (7a) with the consequences which he then lists (7b-10).
 - He became an object of derision; his constant message being judgement to come (8).
 - Because of these bitter experiences he thought to cease testifying but he could not (9).
 - He was surrounded by people who whispered against him, eagerly waiting for any mistake they could use to his discredit and take their revenge upon him (10).
2. But then his confidence in ultimate victory is renewed as he recalls God's promises and character (11-13).

His complaint Renewed (14-18)

1. This passage (14ff.), becomes more easily reconciled and reasonable if some time had passed between the feelings expressed here and those set out in 11-13. Jeremiah was torn by a great spiritual struggle and has now sunk into a deep depression.
2. Notice how the regrets concerning his birth have re-surfaced (15:10).

Questions

1. Describe the reaction to Jeremiah's message and the feelings of Jeremiah himself.
2. How was Jeremiah's faith greatly tested by his experiences?
3. How was Jeremiah able to endure? What help did he receive from God? What gave him courage?

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
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.

Lesson 5: Part Two Prophecies Related To The Reign Of Jehoiakim

Readings: Jer 35; 36

Reading 1: Jeremiah 35 - The Model Of Loyalty Exhibited By The Rechabites

Background

1. The Rechabites were a branch of the Kenite family (1 Chron 2:55). The Kenites were first mentioned as descendants of Abraham (Gen 15:18-19).
2. They had shown kindness to the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt (1 Sam 15:6) and lived among them (Jud 1:16).
3. They had temporarily suspended their tent-dwelling existence to escape the invading armies of Nebuchadnezzar (11; cf. 2 Ki 24:1-2).

The faithfulness of the Rechabites to the principles of their ancestral father (1-11)

1. God's instruction (1-5).
2. The response of the family to Jeremiah's invitation (6-7). They did not drink wine on account of a command given by their forefather, Jonadab. He wanted them to maintain a nomadic lifestyle so as to avoid the potential corrupting influence of a settled existence.
3. They truthfully claimed that all "have dwelt in tents and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us" (8-11); cf. 14.

The Application- a Contrast drawn Between Faithfulness on the one hand and Disloyalty on the other (12-16)

Punishment to Come Upon Judah and blessing Upon the Rechabites (17-19)

Reading 2: Jeremiah 36 - Attitudes Towards God's Word During Jehoiakim's Reign

This passage is of importance because it shows how Jeremiah's prophecies were committed to writing.

The Prophecies of Jeremiah Written on a Scroll (1-8)

1. The command and its timing (1-3).
 - Although Jeremiah was instructed in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's kingship, the public reading of the scroll was not carried out till the ninth month of his fifth.
 - This was a significant and busy year. It was when the prophecy of the seventy-year domination was announced and in which the decisive battle of Carchemish occurred (46:2).
 - It was the beginning of the fulfilment of the threats Jeremiah had been issuing over the last twenty-three years (25:3). Given the lateness in the year, likely the invading armies were extremely near and perhaps their proximity might have softened the hearts of the people and caused them to be more receptive.
2. Jeremiah's circumstances and the book written (4-5).
 - "I [am] confined" or "Restrained" (ASV marg.) qualified by the phrase "I cannot go into the house of the LORD" (5). Possible explanations are: 1) Imprisonment, as in 33:1 and 39:15 but evidently does not have this meaning here. Verse 19 shows that Jeremiah could hide himself from the authorities. 2) Unspecified ceremonial uncleanness but the condition persisted too long for that. 3) Most plausibly he was banned by Jehoiakim under threat of death (ch. 26).

The reading of the Book to the People in the Temple (9-10)

This was not an ordinary fast but one proclaimed on account of an extraordinary situation: Either 1) As some argue a drought though contextually unlikely (14:1) or 2) the impending calamity about to befall the nation.

The Book read to the princes in a chamber of the king's house (11-19)

1. Michaiah's report of Baruch's words at the palace (11-16).

- His motivation is unclear. Perhaps out of ill-will to Baruch and Jeremiah but this is improbable since both were urged to hide before Jehoiakim was notified. Alternatively, he was affected by the prophecies and desired that steps were taken so as to avert the impending calamity.

- As to the named individuals: The name Elishama appears elsewhere (41:1; 2 Ki 25:25). Elnathan the son of Achbor is mentioned also in 26-22. Shaphan, Gemariah's father, had been a scribe (or secretary) in Josiah's government (2 Kings 22:3, 8) and is called "Shaphan the scribe" in v. 10. He was probably a brother of Ahikam, Jeremiah's protector (26:24). The others are unknown apart from this incident.

2. Baruch's attestation to the authorship of the book (17-18).

3. A warning sent by Baruch (19).

The reading of the Book to Jehoiakim (20-26)

Notice that this destruction of the prophecy was not provoked by an outburst of rage but rather a methodical and controlled action. Contrast Jehoiakim's reaction to that of his father (2 Ki 22:11).

The Punishment to Come Upon Jehoiakim (27-32)

1. Jeremiah informed of the king's actions and instructed to re-write the former prophecies (27-28).

2. Doom pronounced against Jehoiakim, his family, his servants, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (29-31).

- For an earlier prediction of Jehoiakim's fate see 22:18-19.

- Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son, reigned only three months and was replaced by Zedekiah, a brother of Jehoiakim (2 Ki 24:6, 8, 17).

3. The prophecies dictated to Baruch (32).

Lesson 6: Part Three

Zedekiah, The Conquest And Its Immediate Aftermath

The Historical Setting

1. Egypt held sway over Judah during Jehoiakim's early years. After the death of Josiah at Megiddo, Jehoahaz was put on the throne by the Jews only to be replaced by Eliakim (renamed Jehoiakim) on Pharaoh Necho's return from his unsuccessful sortie to Haran. Jehoiakim then became Necho's vassal paying tribute to Egypt.
2. However, the Battle of Carchemish (605) removed Egypt from the equation (2 Ki 24:7). Jehoiakim initially submitted to the Babylonians, but rebelled after three years. Although raiding parties were sent to punish the rebellion (2 Ki 24:1-2), Nebuchadnezzar did not lay siege to Jerusalem until the reign of Jehoiachin.
4. Jehoiachin had reigned only three months when the Babylonian army appeared. He went out of the city, presumably thinking to compose the differences and submit to Nebuchadnezzar but to no effect. He was taken into exile along with thousands of Judah's skilled workmen and soldiers in 597 (2 Ki 24:8-17). Ezekiel was among these captives (Eze 1:1-3).
5. After the rebellion of Zedekiah, who had been left on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians again returned. In 586 Jerusalem was destroyed.
6. This outline provides the background for the remaining readings from Jeremiah. He lived through it all. The last of the passages date from the time after Jerusalem's destruction.

First Group Of Readings: Jer 24; 27; 28; 29; 31; 34

R1: 24 - The Two Baskets Of Fruit

The Vision: Two Baskets Of Figs (1-3)

1. The vision was received after the carrying away of Jehoiachin.
2. Two baskets of figs were placed in front of the Temple i.e. the meeting place between God and His people (Ex 29:42-43). In one are very good figs and in the other figs which are so bad that they could not be eaten.

The good figs explained as representing those carried away captive (4-7)

Certain promises were made saying (4-5) I will -

- "Set My eyes on them for good" and "bring them back to this land" (6).
- "Give them a heart to know Me, that I [am] the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart" (7).

The bad figs explained as standing for the residue in Jerusalem and those in Egypt (8-10)

It must have seemed that those who had been taken into exile had been taken out of the picture; they were scattered in foreign lands. If the nation were to have any future, this hope must lie in those who remained. Ezekiel records that this line of thinking was being expressed by those that were still in Jerusalem (Eze 11:14-22; nn. 15). However, Jeremiah took a position that was contrary to appearances. Faith in God would require that the Jews must trust God rather than appearances.

R2: 27 - Judah And Adjacent Nations To Serve Nebuchadnezzar

Message To Foreign Kings Through Their Ambassadors (1-11)

1. Some versions including NKJV incorrectly read "Jehoiakim" (1). However, this is a copyist error and should read "Zedekiah" as in vs. 3, 12.

2. Translations differ as to whether there was a gathering of ambassadors in Jerusalem. If so, they had likely come together to discuss the possibility of revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah was instructed to make a collection of yokes and put one of these on his own neck. The rest he gave to the envoys of the neighbouring nations who had come to Zedekiah (3) with a message that they were to take to their masters. These nations were to be subject to the Babylonians until their time came. Then they in turn would be made subject to other nations (1-7). Back in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (ch. 25), Jeremiah had prophesied that Babylon was going to subjugate this part of the world for seventy years.
3. These nearby nations had their own false prophets who would counsel against submission but they were warned not to listen to their words. Accepting the yoke of service was the only route to living in their own lands (8-11). Nebuchadnezzar was content to put conquered nations under tribute, except where there was stubborn resistance (cf. 2 Ki 24:1 with vs. 10-16 and 2 Ki 25:1-7).

The Same Message To Zedekiah (12-15)

Message Repeated To Priests And People Of Judah (16-22)

1. False prophets were also presenting a contrary message. They told the people that the items removed from the Temple would soon be returned from Babylon (16; cf. 28:3).and encouraged revolt which would result in Jerusalem's ruin (17).
2. What these prophets would be doing if they were true prophets (18-20).
3. Jehovah's intentions regarding the remaining furnishings (21-22).

R3: 28 - Controversy With The False Prophet, Hananiah

Hananiah's Prophecy (1-4)

He predicted that Jehovah would break the yoke of the king of Babylon and return the Temple furnishings within two years (1-3), specifically contradicting Jeremiah's prophecy of 27:16-17. Jehovah would also return Jehoiachin with all those taken captive.

Jeremiah's Answer And Hananiah's Response (5-16)

1. He sarcastically wished that all Hananiah had predicted would come to pass (5-6).
2. But earlier prophets had only predicted war and disaster and not peace. Therefore, only threatening prophecies could be presumed true because only messages of this character would agree with what had gone before (7-8).
3. The prophet predicting peace could only be recognised as from Jehovah if his message was realised (9).
4. Hananiah's Retort (10-11).

The Prophecy Against Hananiah (12-16)

1. Rather than responding in kind, Jeremiah goes away and waits for a prophecy from Jehovah. Then he returned (12).
2. The message:
 - Re the nations. Their wooden yokes would be replaced with ones of iron (13-14).
 - To Hananiah. He had caused the people to believe lies. Therefore, within a year he would die because he had preached rebellion (15-16).

The Death Of Hananiah (17)

R4: 29 - Letters To Those In Exile

Setting

1. As was true in Judah, false prophets kept alive the hope of a speedy end to Babylonian domination and a quick return of the captives. Jeremiah wrote in order to counter this influence which would diminish the chastising effect of the exile.

2. The exact time of writing is not given but it is likely to have been during the early part of Zedekiah's reign (29:2). Note that Jeconiah is an alternative name for Jehoiachin.
3. Ezekiel began preaching among the captives in the fifth year of the captivity which would equate to Zedekiah's fifth year (Eze 1.1-3).

The First Letter (29:1-23).

Introduction To Jeremiah's Letter (1-3)

Zedekiah sent Letters to Nebuchadnezzar and Jeremiah took advantage of the situation to send his own communication. Since Zedekiah travelled in person to Nebuchadnezzar's court in his fourth year (51:59), it is likely that these letters were sent before then.

The Captives Counselling To Prepare For A Long Stay In Babylon And To Seek Babylon's Peace And Prosperity (4-7)

Warning Against Putting Trust In The False Prophets (8-9)

Justification For The Preceding Counsel (10-14)

Jehovah had plans for the people's future good, but they would be effected only after seventy years (10-11) but their fulfilment would be dependent upon the Jews returning to Him with their whole heart (12-14).

The Final Doom Pronounced Upon Jerusalem And Its Remaining Inhabitants (15-20)

1. V. 15 shows the reason and occasion for such an announcement to the captives in Babylon and v. 16 that Jeremiah's prediction was in direct opposition to the false prophets operating there. These prophets were evidently supporting their claim that it would be a short captivity by appealing to the continued existence of the kingdom. The throne of David was still occupied, and some Jews lived in Jerusalem - The city had survived so that the Temple treasures and the exiled people could easily be returned.
2. Jeremiah decisively undermined their argument by predicting that those who remained would be scattered among the nations (17-20).

Punishment Of The False Prophets In Babylon (21-23)

1. These false prophets would become so odious and detestable to some that their end would be a curse wished upon enemies.
2. Roasted in fire is explained by Dan 3:6 and was evidently a form of Babylonian execution.

A Second Letter In Response To The Message Of The False Prophet Shemaiah (29:24-32).

1. Some time passed between the sending of the first and second letters. Shemaiah, stung by Jeremiah's condemnation and rebuttal in the first, wrote letters to the people in Judah, and particularly Zephaniah, instructing that Jeremiah be punished (24-28).
2. Zephaniah's motivation is not known. He does not appear to be on unfriendly terms with Jeremiah and read the letter to him (29; 37:3).
3. Jehovah's pronouncement concerning Shemaiah and his descendants (30-32).

R5: 21 - Prophecy During The Siege Of Jerusalem

Setting

From 21:1 the book deals with prophecies after the reign of Josiah. They are not arranged in chronological order.

The Occasion For The Following Prediction (1-2)

Jerusalem was under siege (4). King Zedekiah ignoring warnings (ch. 27), rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. He sent messengers to Jeremiah asking him to enquire of Jehovah.

Response To The King's Hope That Jehovah Would Deliver Them (3-7)

1. The ASV renders v. 4: "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans that besiege you, without the walls; and I will gather them into the midst of this city." Evidently some of the Jews were outside the walls fighting against the Babylonians. These would be chased back into the city.

2. Far from helping, Jehovah would Himself turn against them (5) as Jeremiah goes on to detail (6-7).

Counsel To The People As To How They May Escape Ruin And Death (8-10)

1. Whoever leaves the city and defects to the Babylonians will live (8-9). The city would be given into the hands of their enemies and burned (10).

2. For further passages on this frequently given advice and the charge made against the prophet see 38:1-4, 17-19.

Exhortation To The Royal Family Concerning How Destruction Could Yet Be Averted (11-12)

Execute justice. Such preaching perhaps caused the temporary freeing of the slaves as a token obedience (34:8-11). But the slaves were subsequently taken back. This change of heart perhaps coincided with the temporary lifting of the siege (34:21-22; 37:5).

The Decree Against Jerusalem (13-14)

To rely on Jerusalem's favoured location was useless, the strength of the city would not save her.

R6: 34 - Two Prophecies In Connection With The Siege And Destruction Of Jerusalem

A Word For Zedekiah Concerning The Outcome Of The Siege And His Own Fate (1-7)

1. This time Zedekiah did not send to Jeremiah, but Jehovah sent the prophet to him with a message. Resistance against the Babylonians was hopeless. The city would be burned but he would see the king with his own eyes and be taken to Babylon (1-3).

2. Jehovah's promise to Zedekiah (4-6). He would die peacefully and have an honourable funeral (cf. 22:18-19).

3. The desperate state of Judah (7). The only other fortified cities still holding out were Lachish and Azekah.

Prophecy Regarding The Liberation Of Slaves (8-22)

Occasion Of The Prophecy (8-11)

Zedekiah made a covenant with the people that all Hebrew slaves should be saved. Perhaps that was to impress God in the hope that the siege would be lifted (cf. 21:1-12).

The Breach Of Faith Set Before The People (12-16)

Jeremiah reminded the people of the provision of the Mosaic Law requiring them to set free any countryman who was in bondage to them in the seventh year of their service (Ex 21:2; Dt 15:12). By forcing the freed slaves back into service, they had even broken the covenant they had personally made in the Temple. Perhaps this re-enslaving coincided with the brief lifting of the siege when the Babylonians withdrew to deal with the Egyptian threat (21-22; cf. 37:5).

The Curse To Come For Violation Of Their Sworn Covenant (17-22)

1. Jehovah proclaims His liberty to the Jews - a freedom to fall by the sword and pestilence etc. (17). They were God's servants brought under His protection but now He sets them free (Lev 25:55).

2. Having loosed the Jews from His protection, Jehovah now resolved to give them over to their enemies (18-22). Barnes comments concerning the reference to Genesis 15:10 (18) as follows: "The Jews spoke of 'cutting' a covenant, because the contracting parties cut a calf in twain and passed between the pieces. Thus cutting a covenant and cutting a calf in twain, meant the same thing."

Lesson 7:

Part Three

Zedekiah, The Conquest And Its Immediate Aftermath

First group of readings: Jer 37-39 - The experiences and Words of Jeremiah During the Siege and Capture of Jerusalem

R1: 37 - During the temporary withdrawal of the Babylonian army

The attitude towards Jehovah's word during Zedekiah's time (1-2).

neither the king, his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to it.

Zedekiah's appeal to Jeremiah (3-5)

1. This embassy is to be distinguished from that detailed earlier (34:1-2). Both prophecies are set at a time when the Babylonians had departed (cf. 34:21-22 with 37:5; see also Eze 17:5).
2. With the Babylonian army withdrawn from the walls, Zedekiah saw hope. Perhaps he was reminded of the circumstances in which Isaiah successfully interceded for the relief of Samaria (Isa 37:1-7).

The reply from Jehovah (6-10)

1. All hope is extinguished. The purpose of Pharaoh's army is stated to be to help Judah, but that help was of no value. They would go back to their own lands (6-7).
2. The Babylonians who had temporarily withdrawn would return and even if their remaining forces consisted of only mortally wounded men, they would burn the city (8-10).

Jeremiah arrested and imprisoned (11-15)

1. The temporary raising of the siege gave the city inhabitants the chance to leave. Jeremiah took advantage of the freedom to claim his share of the "property" in his hometown of Anathoth (11-12). One suggestion is that he was trying to collect the produce of the property belonging to him in readiness for the siege on its resumption, but the meaning is unclear.
2. At the gate he was arrested by a captain of the guard named Irijah and accused of falling away/defecting to the Chaldeans (13). This was a reasonable accusation in the light of Jeremiah's message to the people that the only way to save one's life was to "defect to the Chaldeans" (21:9).
3. On being brought to the princes, they struck him and put him in prison (14-15). Their action implies a hardening of attitude towards Jeremiah in the princes since the days of Jehoiakim (26:16, 24; 36:11-19, 25). These are different individuals in ch. 34. Some of those of Jehoiakim's reign had been in Josiah's government. But the best of the princes had been carried into captivity with Jehoiachin (2 Ki 24:10-17).

A secret Interview with Zedekiah and its result (16-21)

1. Zedekiah brought Jeremiah secretly from the prison and asked if there is any word from Jehovah. The prophet answered that he would be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon (16-17).
2. Note that vs. 17 and 19 suggest that the Babylonians had returned.
3. In response to Jeremiah's request, he was transferred to "the court of the prison." The ASV "court of the guard" with "watch" as a marginal note. Here he was to be given a piece of bread daily while food remained (18-21).

R2: 38 - The final stages of the siege

Introductory note

The situation in chapter 38: The number of fighting men was evidently greatly reduced (4) and this was a source of concern to Zedekiah. Famine had set in (9); the number of deserters had become large (19) - all of these factors indicating that it was the closing period of the siege.

Jeremiah cast into a miry pit (1-6)

1. Though confined, the prophet was able to repeat his message to those who came to visit (2-3), a message which alarmed some (1).
2. A charge of treason brought to the king - "he is weakening the hands" i.e., lowering morale (4). This contained some truth because doubtless these words would make men unwilling to sacrifice their lives for a hopeless cause, the defence of a doomed city. But this was unjust. He was not speaking on behalf of himself but God. It was a message declared out of love for his countrymen expressing a personal conviction that they could only be saved by submission to Babylon. He sought to weaken not a heroic courage fed by trust in God but a stubborn obstinacy which could only lead to their ruin.
3. Faced by the demand for Jeremiah's death, Zedekiah capitulated and allowed the prophet's accusers to do as they felt fit (5).
4. Jeremiah let down into a "dungeon", better "pit", ASV marg. (6). As Gill put it: "Here the princes cast the prophet, in order that he should perish, either with famine or suffocation, or the noisomeness of the place; not caring with their own hands to take away the life of a prophet, and for fear of the people; and this being a more slow and private way of dispatching him, they chose it; for they designed no doubt nothing less than death ..."

The prophet Rescued by Ebed-Melech, But Kept in the Court of the Guard (7-13)

After being freed from the pit, Jeremiah was returned to the court of the guard from whence he had been taken (37:21).

The Last meeting Between Jeremiah and Zedekiah (14-28)

1. The king's enquiry and guarantee of safety (14-16).
2. The word from Jehovah - surrender to the Babylonians, save your life and preserve the city (17-23).
 - The king's concern and assurance given (19-20).
 - The consequences if he failed to surrender (21-23). The women left in the royal house would be taken by the Babylonians. These women would identify what had led to his present predicament. His advisers had led him into this hopeless struggle with the Babylonians and now that the cause was lost had deserted him (20-23).
4. Zedekiah's final order (24-27). The spineless character exhibited here and in v. 5 guaranteed that the outcome of the interview would be fruitless.

R3: 39 - Jerusalem falls*The fate of Jerusalem and its rulers (1-10)*

1. A summary of the capture of the city (1-3).
 - In the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, Nebuchadnezzar began the siege (1).
 - In the fourth month of the eleventh, eighteen months later, the walls were breached (2; on vs. 1-2 comp. 52:4-7 and 2 Ki 25:1-4).
 - Then certain of the Babylonian princes took up a position in the middle gate (3).
 - Notice that this is a condensed account of the destruction of the city.
2. The fate of Zedekiah and the city inhabitants (4-10)
 - On seeing the imminent danger posed by the entry of the Chaldeans, Zedekiah fled Jerusalem by night with the men of war only to be captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar in the land of Hamath to be judged. Here he saw the killing of his sons before his eyes were removed after which he was taken to Babylon (4-7).
 - The palace and the people's houses were burned down (8). This happened in the fifth month (52:12-13; 2 Ki 25:8-10).

- Nebuzaradan carried away captive those who had defected to the Babylonians and the remnant who remained in the city. Only the very poorest were left behind and these he treated generously (9-10).

Provision made for Jeremiah (11-14)

A message of encouragement to Ebed-Melech (15-18)

Jehovah's promise is explained by the bravery of Ebed-Melech on Jeremiah's behalf earlier in the siege (38:7-13). The prophecy was delivered before the taking of the city but is perhaps inserted here so as not to break the sequence of events.

Second group of readings: Jer 40-44 - Words and experiences of Jeremiah after Jerusalem was taken

R1: Chs. 40-41 The Governorship and Assassination of Gedaliah

A fuller account of the release of Jeremiah (40: 1-6; cf. 39:11-14)

1. Jeremiah taken to Ramah (1-3).

- This more detailed account shows that Jeremiah was not immediately freed to Gedaliah's care (39:14) but first taken to Ramah in chains along with those destined for Babylonian captivity (1). Ramah was likely located about five miles north of Jerusalem.
- The conclusion drawn by the captain of the guard (2-3).

2. Jeremiah returns to Judah (4-6).

- Nebuzaradan is carrying out Nebuchadnezzar's order (4; 39:11-12).
- "When I did not answer... (ESV)" (5). There seems to have been some initial indecision on Jeremiah's part which the captain of the guard ended as verses 5 and 6 describe.

The return of fugitives and Peaceful Settlement Under Gedaliah (40:7-12)

1. Encouragement given to those who had borne arms against the Babylonians and subsequently fled (7-10). Gedaliah assures them of safety and protection provided they accept Babylonian rule and peaceably work the land.

2. Likewise, to those who had sought refuge in adjacent countries (11-12).

Gedaliah Forewarned of an Assassination Plot (40:13-16)

Johanan alerted the governor that Baalis the king of Ammon had sent Ishmael to kill him, but Gedaliah did not believe it. Notice that Ishmael was of "the royal family" and so may well have been motivated by jealousy thinking that Gedaliah had no right to this office (41:1).

Gedaliah murdered together with Certain Jews and some Chaldeans at Mizpah (41:1-3)

Despite the warning, Ishmael was received hospitably, and no precautions are mentioned as being taken.

Some visitors from the north slaughtered and those left in Mizpah Carried Away Captive (41:4-10)

1. Ishmael's plan (4-7).

- Unaware of Gedaliah's death, some eighty men came with sacrifices expecting to offer them, likely on the site where the Temple had stood. They were in mourning for the destroyed Temple and perhaps also for the deported Jews. Though the shaving of their beards and the rending of their clothes was in accord with the law, the cutting of themselves was not (4-5; cf. Lev 19:28; Dt 14:1).
- Ishmael went out to meet them and faking grief invited them to meet Gedaliah but instead treacherously killed them (6-7).

2. Eight survived (8-10).

Defeat of Ishmael by Johanan, Liberation of the Captives, and the Plan to go to Egypt (41:11-18)

1. Johanan took his forces to deal with Ishmael, but he escaped and dwelt among the ammonites (11-15).

2. He and those with him went to a place near Bethlehem intending to go on to Egypt. This because they feared that the Babylonians would come against them on account of Gedaliah's murder (16-18).

R2: 42 - The Word of Jehovah Concerning the proposed Flight to Egypt

Request for Guidance (1-6)

The people had no intention to give the full obedience their words suggest. They had already resolved to go to Egypt. They did not expect that Jehovah would ask them to stay in the land given the current situation. They only sought to determine the best way to pursue their fixed plan, seeking guidance within that narrow framework.

Jehovah's answer (7-22)

1. They were to remain in the land having no fear for their future; that was the way to restoration (7-12).
 - The assurance given (10-12).
 - This would test their faith because the possibility of Babylonian reprisals would be an ever-present threat which flight to Egypt would appear to eliminate. They would have to trust God that He would shield them.
2. The Disaster Certain to Follow relocation to Egypt (13-17).
3. Jehovah's Testimony Against a People with such an attitude (18-22).

R3: 43 - Prediction of Nebuchadnezzar's entry into Egypt

The reaction to Jeremiah's Speech—Flight to Egypt (1-7)

1. Johanan and those with him evaded the obligation to which they had committed themselves (42:1-3; 5-6) by charging Jeremiah with speaking falsely (1-3).
 - What does this teach about the nature of genuine commitment?
2. Disobeying Jehovah's word, Johanan and the captains with him fled as far as Tahpanhes, "on the frontier of Egypt, towards Palestine" (JFB) (4-7).
 - They "took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to dwell in the land of Judah, from all nations where they had been driven—" (5). Barnes comments: "Thus was fulfilled the predictions of Jer 24:8-10, and the sole hope of the nation now centered in the exiles at Babylon."
 - Amongst those taken were Jeremiah and Baruch (6).

Revelation at Tahpanhes Regarding the Invasion of Egypt (8-13)

1. A figurative portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar coming to Egypt and there setting up his throne and court (8-10).
2. When he came, he would not only take the land but deliver all to their appointed end - thus those Jews who had thought to take refuge within that land contrary to Jehovah's express command (11).
3. He would burn the buildings housing their false gods and carry away their idols. This would be done with the ease with which a shepherd puts on his cloak and afterwards he would leave in peace (12-13).

R4: 44 - Jeremiah's Last Message, a message against idolatry

Introduction

Chapter 44 shows that the Jews had completely failed to grasp the significance of the disaster that had befallen Jerusalem.

The Threat of Punishment for Idolatry (1-14)

1. We must assume that some time had elapsed since the prophet had delivered his message at Tahpanhes to allow for the Jews to have settled in various parts of Egypt (1).
 - "Migdol, a place near the Red sea, just at the entrance into Egypt, from the land of Canaan, Ex 14:2;

called, by Herodotus, Magdolus {w}; and by Adrichomius {x} said to be distant about a mile and a quarter from Pelusium, or Sin, the strength of Egypt, Eze 30:15..." (Gill)

- Noph: "Memphis, now Cairo (Jer 2:16). (JFB)
- "The country of Pathros: A district of Upper Egypt, known by the name of the [Thebais.]..." (Clarke).
- 2. The Jews reminded of the calamities brought upon them by God because of their idolatrous practices (2-6).
- 3. Application to the present (7-10).
- V. 7 makes an interesting argument. Idolatry was not only a sin against God but also contrary to the interests of themselves, their families and their posterity. As Gill put it: "...Hereby they provoked the Lord to anger, to cut off the men that offered incense to idols; and the women their wives, whom they allowed so to do; and their children, who were brought up in the same practices; so that they would have none to succeed them, to bear their name, and inherit their land ..."

The people's Answer to Jeremiah's Threat (15-19)

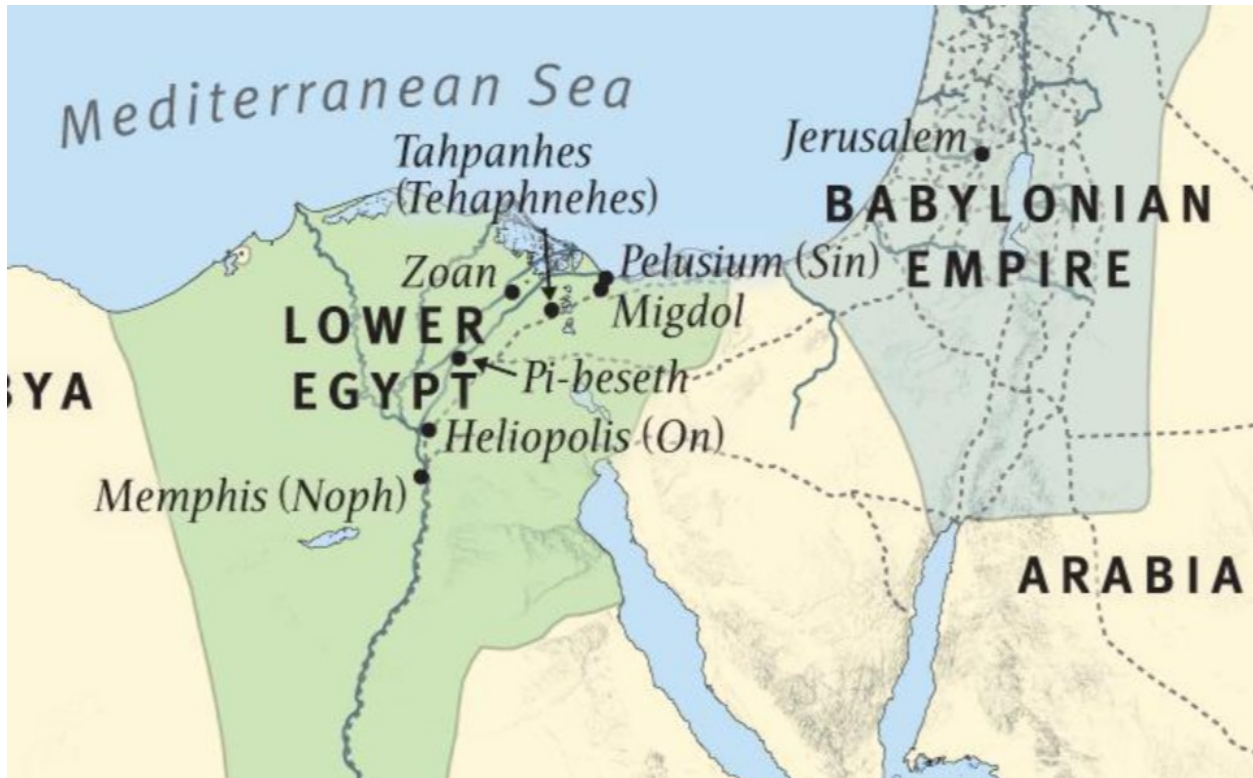
1. The occasion and verdict of the people (15-16).
 - Evidently a festival of some type, "a great multitude" being gathered (15).
 - Their decision regarding the word delivered by Jeremiah: "We will not listen to you" (16).
2. The justification for their action (17-19).
 - They would fulfil their vows and burn incense to the Queen of heaven as they had done in the past for then they were well fed and experienced no trouble (17).
 - but since they had stopped doing that "they had lacked everything" (18).

Jeremiah's Reply (20-30)

1. Rebuttal of the people's reasoning (20-23).
 - Did not God remember the idol worship practised throughout the land (20-21).
 - When Jehovah could no longer endure their wickedness, then their land became a desolate and uninhabited place (22).
 - This was the reason for their present predicament (23).
2. The threat of punishment repeated (24-28).
3. A sign of the coming punishment given (29-30).
 - Jehovah would give Pharaoh Hophra into the hand of his enemies as He had Zedekiah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - Known by Herodotus as Apries, He reigned as sole king 589-570 B.C. In 568 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar brought his army into Egypt. Following a revolt, Pharaoh Hophra was subsequently strangled.

www.internationalstandardbible.com/P/pharaoh-hophra.html

1. Tahpanhes, “on the frontier of Egypt, towards Palestine” (JFB) Jer 43:7.



2. Migdol, a place near the Red sea, just at the entrance into Egypt, from the land of Canaan, Ex 14:2; called, by Herodotus, Magdulus {w}; and by Adrichomius {x} said to be distant about a mile and a quarter from Pelusium, or Sin ... (Gill).



3. “Memphis, now Cairo (Jer 2:16). (JFB).



4. “The country of Pathros: A district of Upper Egypt, known by the name of the [Thebais.]...” (Clarke).

