

THE BIG READ (35)

Jesus in Jeremiah

A. Introduction

1. Every book of the Bible has one dominating theme – Jesus is the Christ.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”
(Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus is the Christ who will suffer and die.

Jesus is the Christ who will rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is the Christ who will forgive the sins of all who repent.

Jesus is the Christ who will be preached to the nations.

2. The Old Testament that Jesus read contained the same 39 books as our English Bibles but was arranged in a different order.

It had three sections – the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44)

The Law (of Moses) contains the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

The second section, the Prophets, was divided into two parts:

The Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) gives us God’s perspective on the history of Israel from the conquest of the Promised Land until their exile from it.

The Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Book of the Twelve) explains why the history of Israel turned out the way it did.

B. Getting Started with Jeremiah

1. Who is Jeremiah?

Jeremiah was a priest who served as a prophet in Judah from the time of King Josiah until the Fall of Jerusalem.

“The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. The word of the LORD came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.” (Jeremiah 1:1-3)

Jeremiah lived and prophesied at a time where the situation in Judah had deteriorated further than in the days of Isaiah, and that was in spite of a time of reform under King Josiah.

After Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, Jeremiah remained in Judah until he was taken away as a hostage to Egypt, where he died.

He is known as the “weeping prophet” because of his grief over the judgment that was going to come to Judah.

“Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people.” (Jeremiah 9:1)

2. What is Jeremiah about?

The book of Jeremiah is a series of messages that Jeremiah preached to the nation of Judah that his scribe Baruch wrote down.

"In the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, each of them will turn from his wicked way; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin." So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the LORD had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on the scroll." (Jeremiah 36:1-4)

It also contains a number of narrative accounts of how various individuals and groups responded to the messages he preached.

There were two aspects to the message God gave Jeremiah to say to Judah.

"Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." (Jeremiah 1:9-10)

Jeremiah was to uproot, tear down, destroy and overthrow – judgment (exile) was coming to the nation.

"I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshipping what their hands have made." (Jeremiah 1:16)

But Jeremiah was also to build and to plant – a future salvation would take place.

God would bring back His people from exile, forgive their sins, and establish a new covenant with them.

"You are saying about this city, 'By the sword, famine and plague it will be handed over to the king of Babylon'; but this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul." (Jeremiah 32:36-41)

By announcing the judgment that was coming to Judah and the promise of future salvation, Jeremiah was calling the nation back to God – giving the nation a final opportunity to repent.

Sadly, Judah rejected his message.

"This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'" (Jeremiah 6:16)

3. How does the book of Jeremiah explain why the history of Israel turned out the way it did?

It was because the people had broken their covenant with God by worshipping idols.

"Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." (Jeremiah 2:12-13)

"Then the LORD said to me, "There is a conspiracy among the people of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem. They have returned to the sins of their forefathers, who refused to listen to my words. They have followed other gods to serve them. Both the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken the covenant I made with their forefathers. Therefore this is what the LORD

me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

"For this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.'" (Jeremiah 32:15)

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will fulfil the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.'" (Jeremiah 33:14-16)

The people were being given yet another opportunity to repent and to return to God, but the majority of the people refused to listen to what Jeremiah said to them.

"They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14)

"But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets, and all the people seized him and said, "You must die!" (Jeremiah 26:8)

"Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the brazier, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire." (Jeremiah 36:23)

"So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud." (Jeremiah 38:6)

Even after the majority of the people of Judah had been exiled to Babylon, the remnant that remained in the land would not turn back to God.

"So Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers and all the people disobeyed the LORD's command to stay in the land of Judah. Instead, Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers led away all the remnant of Judah who had come back to live in the land of Judah from all the nations where they had been scattered. They also led away all the men, women and children and the king's daughters whom Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard had left with Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch son of Neriah. So they entered Egypt in disobedience to the LORD and went as far as Tahpanhes." (Jeremiah 43:4-7)

Still there were a few positive exceptions that did respond to what God was saying through His prophet.

"Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, "Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you shall live in the land I have given to you and your fathers." But you have not paid attention or listened to me. The descendants of Jonadab son of Recab have carried out the command their forefather gave them, but these people have not obeyed me.'" (Jeremiah 35:15-16)

"But Ebed-Melech, a Cushite, an official in the royal palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. While the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate, Ebed-Melech went out of the palace and said to him, "My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death when there is no longer any bread in the city. Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech, a Cushite, "Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies." (Jeremiah 38:7-10)

"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch: You said, 'Woe to me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am worn out with groaning and find no rest.'" The LORD said, "Say this to him: 'This is what the LORD says: I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted, throughout the land. Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the LORD, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life.'" (Jeremiah 45:2-5)

3. In chapters 46 to 52, Jeremiah announces that God will 'tear down' the nations that surround Judah.

Jeremiah announces to the people of Judah, God's judgment on Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar and Hazor, Elam, and Babylon.

They would not get away with their idol worship.

But there is also a promise that God will 'build' for them too.

"This is what the LORD says: "As for all my wicked neighbours who seize the inheritance I gave to my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands and I will uproot the house of Judah from among them. But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to his own inheritance and his own country. And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives' – even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal – then they will be established among my people. But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it," declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 12:14-17)

D. Jesus in Jeremiah

1. Jesus is the weeping prophet.

Like Jeremiah, He would shed tears over the judgment that was going to come to the people of Judah.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." (Matthew 23:37)

Jeremiah points us to how Jesus feels about people who are facing God's wrath because of their sin.

2. Jesus is the righteous branch.

"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness." (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

He is the King who will save His people.

He receives what His people deserves – the cup of God's wrath, exile.

He gives His people what they need – His own righteousness.

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30)

3. Jesus is the initiator of the new covenant.

"And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:19-20)

The promise of a new heart, a new relationship, a new forgiveness, a new land is for those who trust in Him.