



Jeremiah

Transcript

Introduction

00:00-01:10

The book of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was an Israelite priest who lived and worked in Jerusalem during the final decades of the kingdom of southern Judah. He was called as a prophet to warn Israel about the severe consequences of breaking their covenant with God through their idolatry and injustice. And he even predicted that the empire of Babylon would come as God's servant to bring this judgment on Israel by destroying Jerusalem, taking the people into exile. And sadly, his words became reality. Jeremiah lived through the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and witnessed the exile personally.

Now, this book came into existence in a really interesting way. Chapter 36 tells us that after 20 years of Jeremiah's preaching in Jerusalem, God called him to collect all of his sermons and poems and essays and commit them to writing, which Jeremiah did by employing a scribe named Baruch, who wrote down and compiled all of this material into a scroll. Now, Baruch also gathered lots of stories about Jeremiah, and he linked all the pieces together, and so this is why the book reads like an anthology—a collection of collections. It's all been arranged to present this prophet as a messenger of God's justice and grace.

Chapters 1-24

01:11-03:11

So the book begins by God calling Jeremiah to be a prophet, and he's given a dual vocation. He will be a prophet to Israel but also to the nations. And his words will both uproot and tear down but also plant and build up. In other words, he's going to accuse Israel and warn them of God's coming judgment, but he also has a message of hope for the future.

Now, this opening perfectly summarizes the first large section, chapters 1-24. It's a collection of Jeremiah's writings from before the exile. And the core idea here is that Israel has broken the covenant with God and violated all the terms of the agreement they made that are written in the Torah, and in a number of ways. They've adopted the worship of all kinds of Canaanite gods, building idol shrines all over the land, and Jeremiah develops the metaphor of idolatry as adultery and uses the language of prostitution, promiscuity, unfaithfulness to describe how Israel has given their allegiance to other gods. Jeremiah also repeatedly accuses Israel's leaders. The priests, the kings, the other prophets have all become corrupt. They've abandoned the Torah and the covenant, which has led to a tragic result: rampant social injustice. The most vulnerable people in Israelite communities—the widows, the orphans, the immigrants—were all being taken advantage of in clear violation of the laws of the Torah, and Israel's leaders didn't even seem to care.

So a classic place where all of these ideas come together is in chapter 7. It's called Jeremiah's temple sermon. The Israelites are coming to worship their God in the temple as if everything is just fine, but outside the temple, they are worshipping other gods, and some were even adopting the horrifying Canaanite practice of child sacrifice. And so Jeremiah makes his very unpopular announcement: The God of Israel is coming in judgment. He's going to destroy his own temple and punish Israel by sending an enemy from the north. This is an army that God would allow to conquer Jerusalem. And as you read on, you discover he's talking about the great empire of Babylon.

Chapter 25

03:11-03:54

And so this all leads up to a transition in chapter 25. Israel hasn't turned back to their God. And so in the first year of Babylon's new king, Nebuchadnezzar, God tells Jeremiah to announce that the Babylonian armies are headed for Israel and all of its neighbors to conquer them and take them into exile for 70 years. He compares Babylon to a cup of wine filled to the brim with God's just anger at all of Israel's injustice and idolatry, and God will make Israel and the nations drink from this cup.

Now, this chapter is key to the book's design because everything that follows is going to focus on Babylon's coming attack. First on Israel, in chapters 26-45, and then on the other nations, in chapters 46-51.

Chapters 26-45

03:54-05:22

The section about Israel first contains stories about how Jeremiah begged Israel to turn back, how he warned them right up to the last minute, but the leaders of Israel kept rejecting him. The section concludes with a large collection of stories about

how Jerusalem was under siege and eventually destroyed by Babylon, and about how Jeremiah was persecuted all through that time and eventually kidnapped and taken against his will to Egypt by a group of Israelite rebels.

Now, right here in the middle, in between all these dark stories of disaster and judgment, is a collection of Jeremiah's messages of hope for Israel's future. So he picks up on Moses' prediction that after Israel had broken the covenant and gone into exile (see Deuteronomy 30), God would not abandon his people. Rather, he would renew his covenant with them and transform their hearts. Jeremiah develops this promise, and he says that God is going to one day inscribe the laws of the Torah, not on tablets, but rather on the hearts of his own people. He's going to heal their rebellion, so that they can truly one day love and follow him fully. And so one day, Israel will return back to the land, and the messiah from the line of David is going to come. And that's when all nations will come to recognize Israel's God as the true God.

So these chapters are showing that despite Israel's apostasy, God is not going to let Israel's sin get the final word. Rather, his own faithfulness will bring about the fulfillment of his promises, no matter what.

Chapters 46-51

05:22-06:14

After this, we find a large collection of poems about how God is going to use Babylon to judge the nations around Israel—so Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Edom, Ammon, Damascus, Hazor. But then, surprisingly, the longest poems are saved for last, and they're about God's coming judgment on Babylon itself. So although God used this nation to execute his justice, God doesn't endorse their violence and idolatry. And so Babylon too will come under the standard of God's justice. And so Jeremiah denounces this nation's pride and injustice as well.

Now, Babylon is larger than life in these poems, and it reminds us of the image of Babylon all the way back from Genesis chapter 11. Babylon has become the archetypal rebellious nation in their glorification of wealth and war. God's going to give this nation over to its own destruction.

Chapter 52

06:14-06:46

The book concludes with a story taken from the end of the book of 2 Kings. It tells about Babylon's final attack on Jerusalem, how they destroyed the city walls and burned the temple and took the people into exile. This story shows how Jeremiah's

warnings of judgment from chapters 1-24 were fulfilled. But then, the chapter ends with a short story about the captive Israelite king, Jehoiachin; he's heir to the line of David. And the king of Babylon releases him from prison and shows him favor by inviting him to eat at the royal table for the rest of his life—and the book ends.

Conclusion

06:47-07:14

So it's a little glimmer of hope, and this recalls Jeremiah's promises of hope from chapters 30-33. God hasn't abandoned his people or the promise of a future coming king from David's line. And so while this book contains a huge amount of warning and judgment, the final words conclude with a note of hope for the future. And that's what the book of Jeremiah is all about.