

## **ZOOM STUDY LENT 2025: Are you joking, Jeremiah: The prophet, his times, his message, his audience, and their reaction.**

Thursdays, March 6, 13, 20, 27; April 3, 2025 at 3:00 – 4:00 CST.

ZOOM MEETING:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83749391848?pwd=k5WgIk2CfvSUJ8gVTFqL2abFAcdCk2.1>

### **1. When/How often do we read from the Book of Jeremiah?**

#### **18 possible times**

##### **a. Series A - 3 times:**

Lect. 12: Jer. 20:7-13; Lect. 13: Jer. 28:5-9; Lec. 22: Jer.15:15-21

##### **b. Series B – 3 times:**

Lent 5: Jer. 31:31-34; Lec. 16: Jer. 23:1-6; Lec. 25: Jer. 11:18-20

##### **c. Series C- 6 times:**

Advent 4: Jer. 33:14-16; Christ. 2: Jer. 51:7-14; Ep 4: Jer. 1:4-10;  
Ep. 6: Jer. 17:5-10; Lec. 20: Jer. 23:23-29;

Christ the King: Jer. 23:1-6;

##### **d. Easter; alt.: Jer. 31:1-6 (all series)**

##### **e. Saints & Commemorations – 5**

12/28 Holy Innocents: Jer. 31:15-17;

10/28 Simon & Jude: Jer. 26: 1-16

10/31 Reformation: Jer. 31:31-34

Renewers of the Church: Jer. 1-4-10

National Holiday: Jer. 29:4-14

### **2. Who is Jeremiah**

- a. **Jeremiah** was born and grew up in the village of Anathoth, a few miles northeast of Jerusalem, in a priestly family, probably after 650 BCE. He died around 570 BCE in Egypt. The opening verse identifies the prophet in terms of his lineage, his tribe, his town, and the length of his reign as a prophet. He is the son of Hilkiah, but as we do not know who this Hilkiah was, we can say little about his family background or social position. He is of the tribe of Benjamin, a small tribe, but one from which came Israel's first—though tragic—king, Saul. He is from a priestly family, but nothing is said here or in the rest of the book as to what this meant for Jeremiah. His town of Anathoth was about three miles northeast of the city of Jerusalem, on the edge of the wilderness. He does not come from a large city, but a rural village, which may explain both his attitude towards Jerusalem and its temple and the wilderness imagery that pervades his message. That Anathoth was a town of priests whose ancestor, Abiathar, was banished by Solomon may explain in part the antagonism of the Jerusalem priests toward Jeremiah. Jeremiah

began his work around 620 BCE and the forty-year length of his work may indicate the tenacity with which he carried out his prophetic task. In spite of the negative reception of his message his role as prophet was a lifelong commitment.

- b. The name **Jeremiah** יְרֵמְיָהוּ (*Yirmeyahu*) meaning "Yahweh will exalt" or lift up.

### 3. History of Israel/Judah

The era in which Jeremiah lived was one of transition for the ancient Near East. A century before the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry, the northern kingdom of Israel had been overwhelmed by Assyrian invaders. A large portion of its population were deported all over the Assyrian Empire, "and all vestiges of national sovereignty in the area once governed by the northern kingdom were eradicated. The elimination of the northern kingdom was a national catastrophe that haunted its southern counterpart, Judah, throughout that century and, since what followed was a series of powerful military threats to Judah's existence. The Assyrian empire, which had been dominant for two centuries, declined and fell. Its capital, Nineveh, was captured in 612 BCE by the Babylonians and Medes. Egypt had a brief period of resurgence under the 26th dynasty (664–525) but did not prove strong enough to establish an empire. The new world power was the Neo-Babylonian empire, ruled by a Chaldean dynasty whose best known king was Nebuchadnezzar. The small and comparatively insignificant state of Judah had been a vassal of Assyria and, when Assyria declined, asserted its independence for a short time. From the 620's until 597 BCE, Judah vacillated in its allegiance between Babylonia and Egypt. Ultimately, in 597 BCE, Judah became a vassal state of the Neo-Babylonian empire and with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, Judah became a province of the Neo-Babylonian empire.

### 4. Judah when Jeremiah began his ministry

Jeremiah began his ministry during the reign of Josiah or Yoshiyahu, the 16th King of Judah (c. 640–609 BCE). According to the Bible, Josiah became king of the Kingdom of Judah at the age of eight, after the assassination of his father, King Amon, and reigned for 31 years, from 641/640 to 610/609 BCE. Josiah's father, Amon and grandfather, Manasseh are described in the Bible as the worst two kings of Judah. Amon is most remembered for his idolatrous practices during his short two-year reign, which led to a revolt against him and eventually to his assassination in c. 641 BCE.

Manasseh, Josiah's grandfather, is remembered as the worse kind of Judah. He reigned 55 years, first as co-regent with his father Hezekiah from 687-697 BCE, and then on his own from 697-643 BCE. According to Kings, Manasseh reversed the centralizing reforms of his father Hezekiah, and re-established local shrines, possibly for economic reasons. He restored polytheistic worship of Baal and Asherah (2 Kings 21) in the Temple, and sponsored the Assyrian astral cult throughout Judah. So zealous was he in his worship of the foreign gods, he is said to have participated in the sacrificial cult of Moloch which consisted of sacrificing young children or passing them through fire (2 Kings 21:6) His reign may be described as reactionary in relation to his father's, and *Kings* suggests that he may have executed supporters of his father's reforms. During Manasseh's half-century the popular worship was a medley of native and foreign cults, the influence of which was slow to disappear. Amon continued these practices.

Josiah began a series of religious reforms around 622 BCE with the cleansing of the Temple under the direction of Hilkiah, the high priest. While Hilkiah was clearing the treasure room of the Temple he discovered a scroll described in 2 Kings as "the book of the Law",<sup>[18]</sup> and in 2 Chronicles as "the book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses". The phrase *sefer ha-torah* (ספר התורה) in 2 Kings 22:8 is identical to the phrase used in Joshua 1:8 and 8:34 to describe the sacred writings that Joshua had received from Moses. The book is not identified in the text as the Torah and many scholars believe this was either a copy of the Book of Deuteronomy or a text that became a part of Deuteronomy. Jeremiah clearly knew about and approved of these reforms.

Josiah died tragically in 622 BCE in a battle with the Egyptians who were not Judah's enemies. This is that story: In the spring of 609 BCE, Pharaoh Necho II led a sizable army up to the Euphrates River to aid the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which was collapsing under the attacks of the Medes and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Taking the coast route Via Maris into Syria at the head of a large army, consisting mainly of mercenaries; and supported by his Mediterranean fleet along the shore, Necho passed the low tracts of Philistia and Sharon. However, the passage over the ridge of hills which shuts in on the south of the great Jezreel Valley was blocked by the Judean army led by Josiah. Josiah attempted to block the advance at Megiddo, where a fierce battle was fought and Josiah was killed. The religious reforms ended with Josiah's death. After Josiah's death, Jehoiakim's younger brother Jehoahaz (also known as Shallum) was proclaimed king, but after three months Pharaoh Necho II deposed him, making Eliakim king in his place. When placed on the throne, his name was changed to

"Jehoiakim". Jehoiakim reigned for eleven years, until 598 BCE and was succeeded by his son Jeconiah (also known as Jehoiachin), who reigned for only three months. Jeconiah reigned three months and ten days, beginning December 9, 598 BCE. On March 15/16th, 597 BCE, Jeconiah, his entire household and three thousand Jews were exiled to Babylon. After the siege of Jerusalem in 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II deposed king Jehoiachin and installed his uncle Mattanyahu instead, changing his name to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:17). Zedekiah's reign ended with the siege and fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar II, which has been dated to 587 or 586 BCE. After laying siege to the city for about thirty months, Nebuchadnezzar finally succeeded in capturing Jerusalem in 586 BC. Zedekiah and his followers attempted to escape, making their way out of the city, but were captured on the plains of Jericho and taken to Riblah. There, Zedekiah saw his sons put to death. Then his eyes were put out and he was loaded with chains and carried captive to Babylon (2 Kings 25:1–7; Jeremiah 32:4–5; 34:2–3; 39:1–7; 52:4–11; Ezekiel 12:13), where he remained a prisoner until he died. At this point, the Babylonian exile began.

So Jeremiah's ministry encompassed the reigns of 5 kings: Josiah (13 years); Jehoahaz (3 months); Jehoiakim (11 years); Jehoiachin (3 months); and Zedekiah (10 years). After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was treated kindly by the Babylonians but shortly afterwards was taken with his scribe Baruch to Egypt, where he probably spent the remainder of his life, still seeking to turn the people back to God. There is no authentic record of his death.

## **5. Jeremiah's message**

. Central to Jeremiah's message were prophecies of impending divine judgment, forewarning of the nation's idolatry, social injustices, and moral decay. According to the Bible, he prophesied the siege of Jerusalem and Babylonian captivity as consequences for disobedience. Jeremiah's teachings encompassed lamentations, oracles, and symbolic acts, emphasizing the urgency of repentance and the restoration of a covenant relationship with God.

## **6. Jeremiah's audience**

- a. The several royal household, whom he charged with idolatry.
- b. Corrupt greedy priests and false prophets.