

## JEREMIAH

At the beginning of this week a decision of great significance was made in the courts of Northern Ireland, the only part of the United Kingdom where so-called 'gay marriage' has not entered the statute books. Despite 'gay marriage' not being legal the case was upheld against the Christian bakery company who would not produce a cake with a slogan in support of 'gay marriage'. Their action was declared discriminatory by the appeal court judges, whose job it is to defend the law ... which at the present time ... does not legislate for so-called 'gay marriage'. ... The case was brought by a homosexual activist, and paid for and supported by the Government's Equality Commission. ... All in all, everything was stacked against the Christians. Even Peter Tatchell, the outspoken homosexual campaigner, commented, "This verdict is a defeat for freedom of expression. ... [I]n a free society neither they nor anyone else should be compelled to facilitate a political idea that they oppose."

We are most certainly in a battle. The laws of God are being ripped out of our statute books. These are the laws which have served our United Kingdom and established our nation among the world's greatest powers. Sadly, we are on such a decline that it does not matter who is in government for their intentions are the same ... and that is, to *remove and replace God*.

Times were similar when God called Jeremiah. He was brought up in the home of a Jewish priest, - his father (1:1, Hilkiah, 'my portion is Jehovah') and all his family were Levite priests. (This was a different Hilkiah to the similarly-named high priest in II Kings 22:8, who discovered the book of the law. ... Jeremiah's father was a priest, [of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin](#).)

His home was in Anathoth which was one of the cities given/apportioned to the priestly children/descendants of Aaron (Joshua 21:13-18; I Chron. 6:54-60) ... and it was about three miles north-east of Jerusalem. Jeremiah would have been taught about the former heroes of Anathoth, for example, mighty men like Abiezer who was one of King David's 'thirty' closest bodyguards (II Sam. 23:27), and Jehu (I Chron 12:3). ... It had a legacy to be proud of.

And so, Jeremiah's whole background was steeped in the priesthood, - it is how he was brought up and taught. Another interesting factor about Jeremiah is that he tells us more about himself than do any of the other prophets. Throughout his book he tells of his ministry, and the reactions he received. He also tells us about his personal feelings when he had to confront the many troublesome times in his life.

His name means “whom Jehovah has appointed/established” ... and it was a common name for altogether there are seven other Jeremiahs in the Old Testament (II Kings 23:31; I Chron. 5:24; 12:4,10,13; Neh. 10:2; 12:1). ... But *this* Jeremiah is the one who features most, and he is mentioned at least nine times outside his book (II Chron. 35:25; 36:12,21,22; Dan. 9:2; Ezra 1:1; Mt. 2:17; 16:14; 27:9). He is also quoted in Dan.9:2 [25:11,12; 29:10]; Mt. 2:18 [31:15]; Mt. 27:9 [18:2; 19:2,11; 32:6-9]; I Cor. 1:31 [9:24]; Heb. 8:8-12 [31:31-34]; Heb. 10:16,17 [31:33,34].

He was both a priest and a prophet ... Not all priests were prophets, and not all prophets were priests ... but Jeremiah was both.

He remained unmarried, **Jer. 16:1** The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying, **2** Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place. ... And he remained unmarried so that his circumstance would be used by God as an illustration ... **3** For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; **4** They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

He was assisted in his ministry by a scribe called Baruch (‘blessed’), who dictated, copied, and kept safe the records of Jeremiah’s messages (32:12,13,16; 36:4; 45:1).

Jeremiah was known as ‘the weeping prophet’ because of his sorrowful prophecies relating to judgment upon Israel and Jerusalem, cf. **9:1** Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! ... **13:17** But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD’S flock is carried away captive. ... **14:17** Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease. And for his unpopular prophecies he was threatened, jailed, humiliated, thrown into a pit, and forced into exile ... to flee from his people.

He *suffered* for being a faithful servant and spokesman of God. The emphasis of his prophecies was mainly directed towards his own people, but they also included prophecies against other nations. He appealed to his own people in

Judah to repent in order to avoid God's judgement at the hands of the Babylonians (chs. 7 and 26). But when it was obvious they would not repent, he pleaded with them not to resist the Babylonians, to avoid being destroyed (ch. 27). For this approach, he was declared a traitor! There wasn't even a hint of gratitude for speaking the Word of God faithfully and truthfully to his own people. ... He sounded the warning, but no one was listening for they did not want to hear!

The worship of idols was rampant throughout Judah, and even in Jerusalem, the city of God! The Israelites had 'gone off the rails' completely! The wicked King Ahaz had established child-sacrifice to the god Molech in the Valley of Hinnom. Granted, his son King Hezekiah undid his father's evilness and restored a degree of reformation and return to the Lord. But when he died and his son, Manasseh, became king he revived the idolatry and child-sacrifice, which continued into Jeremiah's time (7:31; 19:5; 32:35).

They also worshipped the idolatrous "queen of heaven" (7:18; 44:19), - Ishtar, the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess also called Ashtoreth and Astarte. She was held to be the wife of Baal, also known as Molech. Ishtar was the goddess of fertility ... and all kinds of deviant sins were practised in her name. ... *This* was how corrupt and apostate life was spiritually in Jerusalem and throughout Judah. ... It swept through and across every aspect of society, from the palace and down into every home ...

It had even polluted the temple worship for the priests were perpetuating apostasy, **2:8** The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal [... i.e. the 'all roads lead to God' deception], and walked after things that do not profit. ... Nonetheless, Jeremiah declared the unpopular word of the Lord, **Jer. 8:5** Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. **6** I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. **7** Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD. ... Even 'the birds in the trees' can see it, but my people, - says God, - *are blind!* ... **8** How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. ... They cast doubt upon the word of God! ... **9** The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?

... The scholars and the priests have given way to the people, and they are telling them the notions and ideas they want to hear, - the word of God has been compromised to the point where it is of no effect ... <sup>10</sup> Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. <sup>11</sup> For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly [*qalal, in a trifling superficial manner*], saying, Peace [*shalom*], peace; when there is no peace. ... The old Geneva Bible (1599) translates it, “they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people with sweet words, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace”.

And not only was the nation of Israel addressed, but God sent a similar message of judgment to the outside nations also (25:12-38; ch. 27; chs. 46-51), but they did not listen either ... These were *desperate* times when God’s warnings were arrogantly resisted and ignored.

This is what Jeremiah was dealing with ... and his faithfulness prophesied across a *long* period of spiritual darkness ... approaching fifty years, **Jer. 1:2** To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. <sup>3</sup> It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month. ... That means, - throughout various stages of his ministry, - he prophesied at the same time as Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

He began in the thirteenth year of the King Josiah (1:2, 627 BC), to beyond the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC (chs. 39,40,52). Then, after 586 BC he fled with a remnant into Egypt (chs. 43,44). When the Babylonians invaded Egypt (568-567 BC), they took him captive to Babylon. ... He lived to about 85-90 years old. ... He had a *long* and hard ministry throughout the reigns of Judah’s final five kings, - Josiah 640–609 B.C., Jehoahaz 609 B.C., Jehoiakim 609–598 B.C., Jehoiachin 598–597 B.C., and Zedekiah 597–586 B.C.

For more details about his ministry we turn to II Kings 22-25 and II Chron. 34-36. In those chapters we read about the sin of his people, the threat of the invader God would send, the cruelty of the siege of Jerusalem (II Kgs. 25:2,3), and the destruction that followed (v.4ff.).

On the world's larger international stage, Assyria was in decline, and Babylon was on the rise and rapidly becoming the dominant power. In 612 BC, Babylon captured and destroyed the Assyrian capital Nineveh (as prophesied by Nahum) ... Babylon also invaded Egypt (609-605 BC) and Israel (605 BC, 597 BC, 586 BC). ... There was much going on, and God had measured out each individual stage, and it was all working in accordance with His plan, and as He had set out before His prophets

Jeremiah concentrated on this in chapters 1-29 ... and in 29:10 He gave the promise of God, For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. ... And they did return, *literally*, after seventy years.

This also leads into another promise which, as yet, as not been fulfilled ... and since God keeps His promises *literally*, *this* promise is yet to take place, <sup>23:3</sup> And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. <sup>4</sup> And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; <sup>8</sup> But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land. This message is further expounded in chs. 30-33. ...

God not only promised to spare the remnant and bring them home after seventy years, but he also promised to bless the nation if they would repent ... And would they repent? Of course, they would for He has all His plans made ... and He explains it in the illustration of the potter and the clay, <sup>Jer. 18:1</sup> The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, <sup>2</sup> Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. <sup>3</sup> Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. <sup>4</sup> And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. <sup>5</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>6</sup> O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. ... He has not changed His mind, but He is keeping to His plan to restore His beloved Israel, as previously promised to Jeremiah in 1:5-19 and 15:19-21.

This is simply a brief sketch of the background to help us understand what God was doing in this ancient society, so that, - as we look around us today, - we have the confidence He is working. There are many similarities to the days in which Jeremiah prophesied. There is the same wickedness and evil, but just as God was not prepared to accept them then ... neither is He prepared to accept them now. Human rebellion has increased, - simply because the population has increased, - but no matter how vast it extends, it cannot nullify the plans of God ... And in this we have our confidence that His purposes, - set forth in His Word, - will be ultimately fulfilled, in accordance with His Divine purpose, to His sovereign glory. Amen.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

- I. Preparation of Jeremiah (1:1–19)
  - A. The Context of Jeremiah (1:1–3)
  - B. The Choice of Jeremiah (1:4–10)
  - C. The Charge to Jeremiah (1:11–19)
- II. Proclamations to Judah (2:1–45:5)
  - A. Condemnation of Judah (2:1–29:32)
    - 1. First message (2:1–3:5)
    - 2. Second message (3:6–6:30)
    - 3. Third message (7:1–10:25)
    - 4. Fourth message (11:1–13:27)
    - 5. Fifth message (14:1–17:18)
    - 6. Sixth message (17:19–27)
    - 7. Seventh message (18:1–20:18)
    - 8. Eight message (21:1–14)
    - 9. Ninth message (22:1–23:40)
    - 10. Tenth message (24:1–10)
    - 11. Eleventh message (25:1–38)
    - 12. Twelfth message (26:1–24)
    - 13. Thirteenth message (27:1–28:17)
    - 14. Fourteenth message (29:1–32)
  - B. Consolation to Judah—New Covenant (30:1–33:26)
    - 1. The forecast of restoration (30:1–31:40)
    - 2. The faith in restoration (32:1–44)
    - 3. The forecast of restoration—Part 2 (33:1–26)
  - C. Calamity on Judah (34:1–45:5)
    - 1. Before Judah’s fall (34:1–38:28)
    - 2. During Judah’s fall (39:1–18)
    - 3. After Judah’s fall (40:1–45:5)
- III. Proclamations of Judgment on the Nations (46:1–51:64)
  - A. Introduction (46:1; cf. 25:15–26)
  - B. Against Egypt (46:2–28)
  - C. Against Philistia (47:1–7)
  - D. Against Moab (48:1–47)
  - E. Against Ammon (49:1–6)
  - F. Against Edom (49:7–22)
  - G. Against Damascus (49:23–27)
  - H. Against Kedar and Hazor [Arabia] (49:28–33)
  - I. Against Elam (49:34–39)
  - J. Against Babylon (50:1–51:64)
- IV. The Fall of Jerusalem (52:1–34)
  - A. The Destruction of Jerusalem (52:1–23)
  - B. The Deportation of Jews (52:24–30)
  - C. The Deliverance of Jehoiachin (52:31–34)