

The Prophets

Lesson #25

Introduction To Jeremiah

I. **The Prophet**

A. His background.

1. Jeremiah's name is of disputed meaning. His name may well reflect his parents' hopes for him and the nation, in which case the meaning "the Lord exalts" is preferable to "the Lord hurls" or "the Lord establishes." Jeremiah's relation to so many political events makes it strange that his name appears nowhere in Kings or Chronicles. He was born in 646 B.C. in the Levitical town of Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin; he died, probably in Egypt, not long after 586.
2. In his day Jeremiah was unquestionably the strongest spiritual person in Israel.
 - a) His was not a happy life; his expressions of sorrow are touching. Among the prophets, only he showed his personal feelings toward God.
 - b) By birth, Jeremiah was a priest; by grace, a prophet; by the trials of life, a defender of God's truth; by daily spiritual experience, one of the greatest advocates of prophetic faith in his relationship to God; by temperament, gentle and timid, yet constantly contending against the forces of sin; and by natural desire, a seeker after the love of a companion, his family, friends, and, above all, his people -- which were all denied him.
3. Jeremiah's life -- private and public -- is openly displayed in his book: his brave actions, his tenderheartedness toward his countrymen and his deep emotional and spiritual struggles before God. His disappointments and sufferings were undeniably as moving as those of any other Jewish prophet. His life may be characterized as being one long martyrdom.
4. Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah was of a priestly family, but nothing indicates that he ever served as a priest.
 - a) Possibly his father was the Hilkiah who found the "book of the law" in the temple (2 Kings 22:8).
 - b) Jeremiah's father was probably a descendant of Abiathar, the sole survivor of the priests of Nob (1 Samuel 22:20).
 - (1) After ministering under David, Abiathar was exiled by Solomon to Anathoth, where he had property (1 Kings 2:26).
 - (2) That he was from Anathoth further accounts for the fact that in Josiah's day Jeremiah was not as well known as Huldah the prophetess (2 Kings 22:14-20).

5. Jeremiah was called to the prophetic office in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (1:2; i.e., 626 B.C.); he was about twenty years old at the time and served in that office for more than forty years. The Lord did not permit him to marry (16:2). Though his public ministry was long and difficult, there is no indication that he ever had any disciples; his closest companion was his faithful scribe, Baruch the son of Neriah.
 6. Jeremiah preached in Jerusalem until the fall of the kingdom of Judah in 586 (cf. 7:2; 22:1; 27:1-2; 32:1). After that, he labored for some time among the survivors in Judah and later among the Jews who had fled to Egypt. His call included both Israel and the other nations of his time (1:10). The call was both simple and direct (1:4-5), but the prophet's reaction differed markedly from Isaiah's and Ezekiel's.
- B. His public ministry.
1. Jeremiah's ministry occurred during a politically, socially, morally and spiritually chaotic time. The days of reformation under Hezekiah in the eighth century were eclipsed by the long, ungodly reign of Manasseh, who along with his loyalty to the Assyrian kings maintained an idolatrous worship for his people. Jeremiah did not hide his hatred for the apostasy and social injustices of Manasseh. In this spiritual decline both priests and prophets were implicated.
 2. When Jeremiah began to preach, the godly Josiah had begun his reforms to wipe out idolatry from the kingdom.
 - a) The content of the prophet's preaching confirms his full support of Josiah's reforms and calls for a truly repentant return to the Lord.
 - b) Sadly, the people of Judah had already become so ungodly that they were no longer responsive to calls to return to God. However, the Lord graciously continued to plead with Judah through Jeremiah.
 - c) From the beginning of his ministry, Jeremiah never deviated from the position that Judah and Jerusalem were to be destroyed by a nation from the north and the people carried into captivity (4:5-9; 6:22-26). The threatening invasion of the northern enemy gave urgency to his warnings.
 3. With Jehoiakim's rule (608 B.C.), Jeremiah again began a public ministry. In the famous temple address, he indicated that only faithfulness to God could guarantee the nation's security; otherwise the temple would be destroyed. He aroused bitter opposition to himself and his message from all parts of the nation, including his own family. Sad because of the rejection of his message, yet he loved, prayed for and agonized over his people. No greater and

- truer Jewish patriot ever preached the truth to them. Even when the Lord forbade him to pray for them, he continued to intercede. At times he felt that God Himself had forsaken him. He even cursed the day of his birth.
4. Jehoiakim was so enraged with Jeremiah's condemning messages that he cut the scroll of his prophecy to pieces and burned it. So Jeremiah became a fugitive from the king's wrath.
 - a) In the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon first invaded Judah. He had defeated Pharaoh Neco of Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.), an event of unsurpassed importance because it settled the question of world supremacy in that day.
 - b) After Egypt's defeat, Jeremiah counseled that it was futile and contrary to God's will to resist Nebuchadnezzar. One can imagine the unpopular nature of this message. Thereafter Jeremiah's life was one of misunderstanding and persecution.
 5. Under Zedekiah's rule, Jeremiah fared no better, though this king was not so violently opposed to him as Jehoiakim. Zedekiah was weak and vacillating, constantly fearing his powerful nobles. Jeremiah had some ministry to the king, but it bore little fruit. When the kingdom of Judea fell to Nebuchadnezzar in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, the Babylonian king appointed Gedaliah as governor of Judah (40:1-6). Soon after his appointment the governor was assassinated by a descendant of the throne of David (41:1-2), Ishmael son of Nethaniah.
 - a) The remnant in Mizpah, against Jeremiah's protests, fled to Egypt from the wrath of Babylon (vss. 16-18), and Jeremiah and Baruch were compelled to accompany them (42:1-43:7).
 - b) At the end of his ministry, Jeremiah was at Tahpanhes in Egypt, where he both predicted Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Egypt (43:8-13) and denounced the idolatry of the Jews there (44:1-30). Beyond this nothing is known of Jeremiah's life.
 6. Jeremiah encountered more opposition from more enemies than any other Old Testament prophet. Much of it stemmed from the fact that he continually preached one theme: unconditional surrender. Had not the Lord protected him, he would have been killed.
 7. Nothing certain is known of the time, place or manner of Jeremiah's death. According to 44:29-30, Jeremiah was still alive around 570 B.C. (Pharaoh Hophra [Apries] reigned from 588 to 569 B.C.).
 - a) By providence the prophet who fought his entire life against Egypt was forced to end his days there as a captive.
 - b) A late, unattested tradition claims that the men of Tahpanhes stoned Jeremiah to death.

- c) There is an unconfirmed rabbinical account of his deportation with Baruch to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar at the time of the conquest of Egypt and of his death there.
- 8. Rightly so, Jeremiah, scarcely heeded by his own people, has been accorded great respect after death. Alexandrian Jews especially have held him in profound regard (cf. 2 Maccabees 2:1-8; 15:12-16; Matthew 16:14).

II. **Purpose**

- A. Jeremiah is the most autobiographical of all the prophets. He has been credited with the survival of his people after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., a veritable savior of the Jews. Nonetheless, this man of God is one of the most misunderstood of the great Old Testament leaders.
- B. The book of Jeremiah is longer than Isaiah or Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets combined are about a third shorter. The book sheds light on the subject of the decline and fall of the kingdom of Judah and influenced thinking in subsequent ages.

III. **Historical Scope**

- A. Prophetic background.
 - 1. Just as the eighth century B.C. saw several prophets in Israel, so did the end of the seventh and the first half of the sixth centuries. The contemporary prophets in Judah were Zephaniah (Zephaniah 1:1), Obadiah (Obadiah 11-14), the prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22:11; 2 Chronicles 34:22). Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1-3) and Daniel (Daniel 1:1) were in Babylon.
 - 2. The relationship between Jeremiah and Ezekiel was especially close. Probably Nahum and Habakkuk were also contemporaries of Jeremiah. Three of the four major prophets were related to captivities: (1) Daniel in Jehoiakim's time (Daniel 1:1), (2) Ezekiel in Jehoiachin's time (Ezekiel 1:1-3) and (3) Jeremiah in Zedekiah's time (1:1-3).
- B. Historical background.
 - 1. The events of his time.
 - a) To understand Jeremiah's prophecy requires close scrutiny of his times because of (1) the critical events in the political world of his day -- events in which Judah was directly affected -- and (2) the number of kings in Judah who reigned during his career and with whom he had close contact. Jeremiah was a national and international figure. A general chronological table helps visualize the historical background of his book.
 - (1) 639–609 B.C. -- the reign of Josiah.
 - (2) 609 B.C. (3 months) -- the reign of Jehoahaz.

- (3) 609–597 B.C. -- the reign of Jehoiakim.
 - (4) 597 B.C. (3 months) -- the reign of Jehoiachin.
 - (5) 597–586 B.C. -- the reign of Zedekiah.
 - (6) 586 B.C. -- the fall of Jerusalem.
 - (7) 586(?) B.C. -- the assassination of Gedaliah.
- b) The times of Jeremiah are among the most important in Old Testament history. Because of their significance, they are the best-documented times in all Israel's history. The book of Jeremiah is so filled with historical, biographical and autobiographical material that his life can be synchronized with dates and known events to a degree unparalleled in the other prophets. A general chronological table of significant events during this period will be helpful.
- (1) 669-630 B.C. -- the dissolution of the Assyrian Empire after the death of Ashurbanipal.
 - (2) 626 B.C. -- the call of Jeremiah.
 - (3) 612 B.C. -- the fall of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire.
 - (4) 609 B.C. -- the death of Josiah at Megiddo.
 - (5) 605 B.C. -- the battle between Egypt and Babylonia at Carchemish, with Babylonia emerging victorious.
 - (6) 605 B.C. -- the first siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel exiled to Babylon).
 - (7) 597 B.C. -- the second siege of Jerusalem (Ezekiel exiled to Babylon).
 - (8) 588–586 B.C. -- the final siege of Jerusalem, beginning the Babylonian captivity.
- c) Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar and conqueror of Assyria, came from Chaldea, a province in the southern part of Babylonia, and reigned from 625 to 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, the most famous of the Babylonian monarchs, ruled from 605 to 562 B.C.
- d) Geographically and politically Judah was in a vulnerable position between Egypt and Assyria.
- (1) In the eighth century B.C., Isaiah had warned against trusting Egypt and had spoken of the threat of Assyria (Isaiah 30:1-7; 37:1-38). By God's protection the kingdom of Judah had escaped Sennacherib's forces.
 - (2) From the godly reign of Hezekiah, the nation declined to the lowest spiritual level under the rule of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:9-15; 24:3-4). If Jeremiah was called in his early twenties, he lived in the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. Under Manasseh's long reign of 55 years, the godly reforms of his father, Hezekiah, were forgotten.

(3) Judah was then under Assyrian power; so to please his overlords, Manasseh introduced idolatrous elements into the temple worship at Jerusalem. Israel was already exiled, and the remnant residing there had embraced mixed elements in their worship to God (2 Kings 17:28). During the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, the Assyrians conquered Egypt; but the latter regained strength under Psammetik I (664–609 B.C.), so that Judah found herself balancing one great power against the other.

2. The rulers of his time.

a) Josiah.

(1) Josiah came to the throne when he was eight years old. Politically, Assyria was under strong opposition from Babylon. This gave Judah more freedom to throw off Assyrian elements in her worship.

(a) In 633 B.C., Josiah sought the Lord (2 Chronicles 34:3); his reforms began in 629 B.C. (2 Chronicles 24:36); in 623–622 B.C., the book of the law was found in the temple (2 Kings 22:3-8; 2 Chronicles 34:8-15); and Jerusalem was made the only place for worship.

(b) The reforms are detailed in 2 Kings 22-23; though widespread and well instituted, they did not last, as is evident from Jeremiah's condemnation of the nation's sins.

(2) In 609 B.C., Pharaoh Neco of Egypt joined Assyria to strengthen them. Josiah, though he had been warned by Neco, interfered and lost his life at the Battle of Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:20-24).

(a) However, Babylon, stronger than Egypt, dominated the world under Nabopolassar of Chaldea, ruler of Babylonia by 625 B.C. and the destroyer of Nineveh in 612 B.C.

(b) His son, Nebuchadnezzar II, succeeded him and reigned for 43 years, having defeated Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. (46:2; 2 Chronicles 35:20). Thereafter Babylon was the dominant world power.

(c) For years Jeremiah steadily counseled against Judah's involvement in world politics. When the people refused his counsel, he repeatedly begged them to surrender to Babylon, who at that time were an instrument for carrying out God's will.

b) Jehoahaz.

(1) Distraught over the tragic death of godly Josiah, the people set Jehoahaz (Shallum [22:11]), son of Josiah, on the throne.

- (2) In three months of rule he manifested an anti-Egypt and pro-Babylon policy, for which he was summarily deposed by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:31-33), who took him to Egypt and imposed tribute on the country.
 - (3) In his place Neco set on the throne Eliakim, the oldest son of Josiah and half-brother of Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:34, 36), changing his name to Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:30-35; 2 Chronicles 36:1-4).
- c) Jehoiakim.
- (1) The reign of this king was the time of Jeremiah's greatest trial and opposition.
 - (a) Politically, king and prophet were diametrically opposed, the king favoring Egypt and Jeremiah counseling submission to Babylon.
 - (b) Spiritually, the two were even farther apart. Jehoiakim was a very ungodly king. He has been labeled a blood-thirsty tyrant and an enemy of the truth. He cared nothing for the worship of God, exacted excessive taxes, used forced labor without pay and had no regard for the word or prophet of God (22:13-14).
 - (2) In Jehoiakim's eleven year reign, the Battle of Carchemish took place (cf. 46:2). It was an event of permanent significance, for it marked the transfer of power over the Middle East from Egypt to Babylon.
 - (a) This defeat was the final blow to Egypt's aspirations and guaranteed the Chaldeans the supremacy of the West.
 - (b) It was the turning point of the period and had important consequences for Israel's future.
 - i) The Babylonians made Jehoiakim their vassal and exiled a number of Jewish nobles (2 Kings 24:1), among them Daniel (Daniel 1:1).
 - ii) Some scholars consider this first taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar the beginning of the seventy years of Judah's exile in Babylon (25:11); with it the dissolution of the kingdom of David had begun.
 - (3) Jehoiakim sponsored idolatry and had no concern for the widespread social problems during his reign (22:13-19; 2 Kings 23:37).
 - (a) Of all the kings under whom Jeremiah prophesied, Jehoiakim was the most steadfast foe of the message and messenger of God (cf. 26:20-23; 36:20-26).
 - (b) In 598-597 B.C., he revolted against Babylon but was unsuccessful, thus adding to Judah's problems (2 Kings

24:1-5). In Jehoiakim's time, Jeremiah was persecuted, plotted against, maligned and imprisoned. The king destroyed his written prophecies, but the prophet did not swerve from his divine commission (cf. 11:18-23; 12:6; 15:15-18; 18:18; 20:2; 26:10-11, 24; 36:23).

(c) Jehoiakim died violently in Jerusalem in 598–597 B.C., in the eleventh year of his rule, as Jeremiah had predicted (22:18-19). Ezra records Jehoiakim's deportation to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chronicles 36:6-7; cf. Daniel 1:1).

d) Jehoiachin.

(1) Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah and Coniah), who reigned only three months (cf. 2 Kings 24:8). This young man ruled long enough to reveal himself as a wicked king, whom Jeremiah strongly denounced (22:24-30).

(2) Jehoiachin's father's rebellion against Babylon forced Nebuchadnezzar to besiege Jerusalem in 597 B.C. When Jehoiachin surrendered, he was exiled to Babylon with many of Judah's upper class (among them the prophet Ezekiel [Ezekiel 1:2]), and the temple was plundered (2 Kings 24:10-16).

(3) Jehoiachin was a prisoner in Babylon for 37 years (52:31-34). He was released by Evil-Merodach, son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:27-30). Strangely, the Jews long held a hope of his restoration to the throne of David; and Ezekiel refers to him, not to Zedekiah his successor, as king.

e) Zedekiah.

(1) After the exile of Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar set on the Judean throne Mattaniah, a son of Josiah, full brother of Eliakim and uncle of Jehoiachin, and changed his name to Zedekiah (2 Kings 23:34; 24:17; 2 Chronicles 36:10; Jeremiah 1:3), a fact confirmed by the Babylonian Chronicles.

(a) The situation in Judah at the outset of Zedekiah's reign was that a series of sieges and deportations with changes in rulers had depleted the small kingdom of some of its best minds.

(b) Zedekiah, weak, vacillating and deficient in personality, found it beyond him to exert effective leadership.

(c) A puppet of Babylon, to whose king he had sworn loyalty in the name of the God of Israel, he was outmaneuvered in every decision by the pro-Egyptian policy of his officials.

- (2) Zedekiah's relationship with Jeremiah was closer than any previous Judean king, with the exception of the godly Josiah.
 - (a) However, he was powerless to protect Jeremiah from the ruthless objectives of the nobles and to follow the God-given counsel that Jeremiah reiterated about submitting to Nebuchadnezzar.
 - (b) In the fourth year of his reign, Zedekiah plotted rebellion against Babylon with a confederacy of the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon (27:3-11). This was their object in sending representatives to Jerusalem. The plot was denounced by Jeremiah and ultimately fell apart. Perhaps Zedekiah's visit to Babylon that same year was intended to assure Nebuchadnezzar of his loyalty (51:59).
- (3) The end, however, was not far off. In the ninth year of his reign (588 B.C.), Zedekiah conspired with Pharaoh Hophra against Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon responded with an invasion of Judah, which ended when the city fell in the summer of 586 B.C. (2 Kings 24:20-25:7; 2 Chronicles 36:17; Jeremiah 38:28-39:10).
 - (a) Throughout the siege, Jeremiah urged Zedekiah to surrender (21:1-10; 34:1-5, 17-22; 37:3-10, 16-17; 38:14-23). At one point, the approach of the Egyptian army compelled the withdrawal of Babylon's forces, but the siege was resumed (37:1-10).
 - (b) Meanwhile, because of the cowardly attitude of Zedekiah, Jeremiah was mistreated by his enemies in Judah (37:11-38:28). The destruction of Jerusalem at this time, annually observed in mourning among Jews on the ninth of the month Ab, was the greatest judgment of God on Israel in the Old Testament.
 - (c) Zedekiah, captured as he tried to escape, his sons slain before him and his eyes blinded, was carried to Babylon with a company of his subjects.
- (4) After the destruction of the city and temple, the king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah governor of Judah. After a brief period (which could have been three months to a few years), Gedaliah was murdered by a descendant of the house of David, possibly at the instigation of pro-Egyptian sympathizers. Fearing reprisal from Babylon, the survivors of this assassination fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah and Baruch by force with them. It is ironic that Jeremiah, who counseled

throughout his ministry against confidence in Egypt, should end his earthly days there against his will.

IV. **Authorship And Date**

- A. Scholars have extensively discussed the origin of this book and have held differing opinions about it. Broadly speaking, they are divided into two groups:
 - 1. Those who think Jeremiah wrote very little of it, assigning the major part of it to other writers. This group favors a division of the book into three sources:
 - a) Messages dictated by Jeremiah.
 - b) A biography of Jeremiah, probably by Baruch.
 - c) Various contributions from redactors and later authors.
 - 2. Those who assign the entire book to Jeremiah through the aid of Baruch ([36:17-18; 45:1] i.e., he was to Jeremiah what Luke was to Paul).
- B. The passages in Jeremiah on the enemy from the north fit what is known of the Babylonians.
 - 1. Internal evidence indicates that the first written material of the book was done in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (605 B.C.; cf. 36:1-2). In addition, passages like 29:1; 30:2; and 51:60 compel the conclusion that prophecies, apart from those contained in Baruch's scroll, were immediately recorded. The scroll burned by Jehoiakim was replaced with additions (36:32).
 - 2. Apparently through the first several years of his ministry, Jeremiah had kept notes of his messages, which were put into writing at God's command (36:2). It seems reasonable that Jeremiah edited his work during the captivity. The entire book was probably gathered together shortly after his death.
 - 3. The conclusion appears inescapable that Baruch's rewritten scroll was the basis for Jeremiah's written prophecies. The book bears marks of having been gathered together by one person at one time.

V. **Scriptural Themes**

- A. The dominant elements of Jeremiah's message are of primary significance for his day and ours. What sustained him throughout a lifetime of grief and opposition was that he had an undying confidence in God and His promises (18:7; 29:14; 32:1-15). The two focal points of his life and ministry were God -- His goodness, His claims on humankind, His requirements of repentance and faith; and His wayward people -- their welfare, both physically and spiritually.
- B. Jeremiah enjoyed a high concept of God as Lord of all creation (27:5). The gods of the nations are nothing (10:11, 14; 14:22).

1. God knows the malady of the human heart (17:9-10); yet He loves His people deeply (31:1-3), longing to bless those who trust Him (17:7). Idolatrous worship and heartless service are an abomination to Him (19:4-6; 14:12). No greater insult can be offered God than to represent Him under the form of dead idols. Idolatry was the special sin Jeremiah tirelessly preached against.
 2. Three kinds of falsehood stirred him:
 - a) False security that refused all calls for repentance.
 - b) False prophets who lulled the people into dangerous complacency.
 - c) The false worship of idols.
 - (1) Worship was offered to Baal, Molech and the queen of heaven (Ishtar).
 - (2) Images of these deities were even placed in the temple (32:34; cf. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; 44:18-19).
- C. Immorality always accompanies idolatry. In Jeremiah's time moral corruption was widespread and social injustices abounded (5:1-9; 7:1-11; 23:10-14). Priests and prophets were as responsible as the rest of Judah (6:13-15).
1. Yet the nation carried out its religious rites. God was not pleased with these merely external services. Jeremiah preached that judgment was inescapable. God had already used drought, famine and foreign invaders (14:1-6; 4:11-22); He would bring the culminating visitation through Nebuchadnezzar (25:9).
 2. Nevertheless God's love and faithfulness to His people would not permit the judgment to be fatal or final. There was a future hope. Jeremiah foretold the return from captivity in Babylon (25:11; 29:10) as well as the doom of Babylon itself (50:1-51:64).
- D. Jeremiah also had a ministry to the nations (1:5, 10). He saw Nebuchadnezzar as God's agent in the events of that day (27:6). He warned the other nations against resisting Nebuchadnezzar (27:1-11). In God's name he demanded righteousness of all nations (46:1-51:64). He voiced God's concern for the welfare of all people (29:1-14).
- E. Jeremiah preached more about repentance than any other prophet. His overarching concern at all times was the condition of the individual heart. His exposition of the New Covenant is repeated nowhere else in the Old Testament (31:31-34). The New Testament shows us how deeply this truth entered into the work of our Lord.
- F. As for Jeremiah's predictions of the distant future, Israel will return in penitence to the Lord (32:37-40). The Messiah will rule over her in justice and righteousness (23:5-8). The remnant of the nations will enjoy blessing at that time (3:17; 16:19).

- G. As for messianic prophecy, Jeremiah does not prominently describe the Messiah. Jeremiah does give some significant messianic passages:
1. The proclamation of a revelation of God that will outshine the ark of the covenant (3:14-17).
 2. The disclosure of a new covenant (31:31-34).
 3. The realization of the Mosaic ideal with the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (33:14-26).
- H. The lasting value of Jeremiah's book lies not only in the allusions in the New Testament, but also in its being a wonderful way for learning how to have fellowship with God. It presents personal faith at its highest in the Old Testament, and it is wonderful for understanding the deeper meaning of the priesthood and the monarchy under the Davidic dynasty (23:1-8; 33:14-18).
- I. Because Jeremiah is so unlike any other Old Testament prophet, and because his writings are bound up with his life and thought, one must consider in depth the inner life and characteristics of this prophet.
1. Besides the features of his natural abilities, his emotions, his motivation and his personal relationship to the Lord, there are the so-called "Confessions of Jeremiah" (11:18-20; 12:1-4; 15:10, 15-18; 17:14-18; 18:19-23; 20:7-11, 14-18), his dialogues with the Lord, his imprecations on his enemies and especially his prayers.
 - a) Other prophets narrate their experiences, but the Old Testament has few parallels to these self-disclosures. In fact, no Old Testament prophet has disclosed more of his heart and spiritual yearnings than Jeremiah.
 - b) In them Jeremiah stands in all his human frailty, his love for his people and his utter devotion to the will and call of God.
 - c) Though he was gentle and timid, because of the call and commission of God he adamantly held to his duty.
 2. No one in Judah was more patriotic; yet he never allowed himself to gloss over Judah's sin.
 - a) However, through all his condemnations he saw God's final aim to bless His people, whether the remnant in the land or the exiles in Babylon (29:1-14; 32:1-15).
 - b) His prophecies of Israel's restoration are among the greatest in the Bible (3:14-18; 30:18-22; 31:1-14; 33:10-13).
 3. His was a lonely and isolated life; though he longed for human fellowship and love, all his life he was denied a family and close friends. His fellowship with God was particularly deep and intimate (cf. 12:1-6; 14:7-15:21).
- J. We often forget that Jeremiah was a man of exceptional courage who was unwaveringly determined to proclaim God's truth though the entire nation opposed him. These trials and temptations molded him into

one of the greatest spiritual giants of all time. Because of his timidity, he was prone to discouragement and despair. The Lord gave him no signs or miracles to confirm the validity of his predictions.

- K. Jeremiah had an intense and unrelenting hatred of sin, rebuking it in scathing words. He scrutinized the political, social, moral and spiritual life of the people. Prophets, priests, kings, nobles and relatives received no favoritism from him (cf. 5:1-5; 13:1-14; 23:1-4; 22:13-19).