

Jeremiah

Author

The author of the Book of Jeremiah was Jeremiah. But he had a scribe named Baruch wrote the words the Book of Jeremiah dictated (see Jeremiah 36:1-8). After King Jehoiakim destroyed this writing, Jeremiah dictated it to Baruch again (see Jeremiah 36:20-32). But as Jeremiah 36:32 reveals, God led Jeremiah to add more words: ***“Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah all the words of the book of Jeremiah which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words.”***

Date

In its original form, the Book of Jeremiah minus its later additions was written in the 4th year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah (see Jeremiah 36:1). The second version was written a year later (see Jeremiah 36:9-32). This was in the late 600's B.C. The Book was fully compiled after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Background

The prophet Jeremiah ministered during the final years of the southern kingdom of Judah. This was between 626-586 B.C. and was before the Babylonians conquered Judah and its capital Jerusalem and took many of its people to exile in Babylonian.

Jeremiah lived during the reigns of seven kings of Judah:

- Manasseh – an extremely wicked king who later turned to God.
- Amon – an evil king.
- Josiah – a very godly king who brought reform and revival to Judah.
- Jehoahaz – an evil king.
- Jehoiakim – a wicked king.
- Jehoiachin – an evil king.
- Zedekiah – an evil king.

During the time Josiah was king of Judah, he tried with all his heart to turn the nation back to the Lord. 2 Chronicles 34:1-13 records how he rid Judah and Jerusalem of all pagan images and altars and repaired God's Temple. Josiah restored the true worship of God to Judah (see 2 Chronicles 34:29-33) which had been mostly repressed in the times of previous Kings Manasseh and Amon (see 2 Chronicles 33:1-9 and 21-23).

Josiah also removed the booths of those practicing homosexuality and prostitution in religious rituals in God's Temple (see 2 Kings 23:7). He destroyed Topheth, a place of human

sacrifice (see 2 Kings 23:10) and attempted to rid Judah of the sexually immoral worship of Baal and Asterah (see 2 Kings 23:4-5).

Josiah led this revival and reform movement for 31 years between 640-609 B.C. But after he died, the kings and people of Judah quickly returned to living compromising wicked lives. They claimed to still worship the Lord but they added and mixed many pagan beliefs, practices and customs in with their supposed devotion to God. This occurred for *23 years* from 609 B.C. till when the Babylonians conquered Judah in 586 B.C.

Perhaps because they had experience this time of limited revival and spiritual renewal in Judah during King Josiah's reign, many Judeans felt a false assurance that God would not punish Judah like He had the northern kingdom of Israel. But *only 23 years* after Josiah's time, God handed Judah and Jerusalem over to pagan King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his brutal army.

Jeremiah began his ministry at about twenty years of age in the thirteenth year of King Josiah (see Jeremiah 13:2). Under godly King Josiah, Jeremiah was unmolested by the government. At Josiah's death, Jeremiah lamented for him (see 2 Chronicles 35:25). But the following Kings Jehohaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah opposed and/or persecuted Jeremiah in different ways. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jeremiah ministered to the southern nation of Judah for *40 years* with little response from nearly all of its people.

Jeremiah was of the lineage of priests (see Jeremiah 1:1) but he may not have been trained to function as one. His original home was at Anathoth, a city about three miles north-east of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah emphasised God's love and His people loving Him

Jeremiah 31:3 stresses the everlasting love God has for His people and how He draws them to Him with His lovingkindness: ***"The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.'"*** Jeremiah 9:24 and 32:18 also instruct us about God's wonderful lovingkindness or mercy towards humans.

God's love for His people is emphasised by the fact that four times God refers to His desire to have the Judeans as His people and Him to be their personal God (see Jeremiah 30:22, 31:1, 31:33 and 32:38). Jeremiah 30:22 says: ***"You shall be My people, and I will be your God."***

In Jeremiah 2:2, Jeremiah records that love was one of the key elements when the people of Israel began their relationship with the Lord while they were in the wilderness before their entry in the land of Canaan: ***"Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.'"***

Evidence of the Judeans' compromising paganised worship of the Lord

The following comments which God told the prophet Jeremiah to tell the people of Judah and/or Jerusalem indicate how they were trying to worship the Lord while compromising with evil pagan attitudes, practices and customs. Jeremiah 7:1-11 states: ***"The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 'Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there***

this word, and say, "Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!" Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.' For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'? Has this house, which is called by My Name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the Lord."

Jeremiah 19:5 records the Judeans were murdering their sons as human sacrifices to Baal. Jeremiah 23:10 says: *"For the land is full of adulterers..."* Jeremiah 5:1-2 and 7-9 states: *"Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; see now and know; and seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her. Though they say, 'As the Lord lives,' Surely they swear falsely...How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things?' says the Lord. 'And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?'"*

The people of Judea wanted the freedom to sin as much as they wanted while also enjoying God's blessings and prosperity at the same time.

Jeremiah 11:1-11 records that God said the people of Judah and Jerusalem had broken the terms and conditions of the Mosaic Covenant. Jeremiah 11:1-5 and 10 states: *"The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 'Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, "Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God," that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day.'" Then I answered and said "So be it, Lord..." They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers."*

In the Book of Jeremiah, the Hebrew words for *"backsliding"* and *"backslidings"* away from God are used 13 times. These words are used in relation to the Judeans turning away from God and turning to sin and evil.

In Jeremiah 9:13-14, Jeremiah said that the Judeans: *"Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it, but they have walked according to the imagination of their own heart and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them."*

Jeremiah 19:15 states: ***“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will bring on this city and on all her towns all the doom that I have pronounced against it, because they have stiffened their necks that they might not hear My words.’”***

Unbiblical teachings and doctrines were common place

In the time of Jeremiah, false unbiblical teachings and doctrines abounded in the nation of Judah. Jeremiah 8:8 records: ***“How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us?’ Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood.”***

The Judeans were imagining that just because God had given them the teachings and commands of the Mosaic Law that this automatically made them wise. This is regardless of the fact they were not interested in obeying many of God’s written commands and instructions. They were similar to the hypocritical Jews Paul spoke of in Romans 2:17-24. In Jeremiah 23:36, God said that many Israelites had ***“perverted the words of the living God.”***

Here are some examples of these unbiblical teachings:

- a) The Judeans believed it was right for them to also worship the pagan Queen of Heaven (see Jeremiah 7:17-18 and 44:17-25).
- b) They believed that people could be innocent before God despite worshipping idols and images, committing adultery, being involved with orgies and having sex with religious prostitutes associated with Baal worship and so on (see Jeremiah 2:35).
- c) The people of Judea seemed to have developed a superstitious attitude to God’s Temple. Jeremiah 7:5 and 7:14 seem to suggest that they had a trust in the Temple itself: ***“For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor...therefore I will do to this house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.”***
- d) The Judeans thought it was too negative to believe that God would punish them if they refused to turn from their known sins (see Jeremiah 5:12, 14:13 and 23:17). Jeremiah 5:12 states: ***“They have lied about the Lord, and said, ‘It is not He. Neither will we see sword or famine.’”*** They believed they were His people, had His Temple and Presence among them and His unconditional promises of blessings and prosperity in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

The Judeans were like the Israelites in Eli’s time

The Judeans in Jeremiah’s time had a similar attitude to the Israelites in the time that Eli was the High priest of Israel and the Ark of the Covenant and God’s Tabernacle were at Shiloh. At that latter time, Eli was permitting his sons who were priests to have sex with the women who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle and to eat of the fat and other parts of the meat of the sacrificial offerings contrary to God’s commands (see 1 Samuel 2:12-17 and 22-25). Also, many of the other Israelites were worshipping the pagan Baals, Ashtoreths and other gods and participating in the sexual immorality, idolatry and witchcraft associated with these religions.

This is evident from 1 Samuel 7:3-4 when Samuel confronted the Israelites about this¹: ***“Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, ‘If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.’ So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.”***

But note as 1 Samuel 4:1 reveals, the Israelites assumed that because they had the Mosaic Covenant promises of God’s Presence being associated with the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle (see Exodus 25:21-22, 30:6, Leviticus 16:2, Numbers 7:89, 1 Samuel 4:4, 2 Samuel 6:2 and 2 Kings 19:15), this would guarantee they would defeat the pagan Philistine army even if the Israelites were living wicked compromising lives. They thought God’s Presence would go with them to defeat their enemies regardless of whether they were walking in the fruit of faith – obedience to His commands. They were assuming God’s promises in verse like Deuteronomy 6:10-11 and 7:1-2 about Him helping them defeat their enemies would occur regardless of how sinful they were living.

These Israelites ignored God’s Words in Deuteronomy 11:22-25: ***“For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do – to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him – then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand against you; the Lord your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.”***

1 Samuel 4:1-2 records that the Israelites in Eli’s time were defeated by the Philistines. The surrounding context of these verses do not say the Israelites lost because of their sins. But the Books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges reveal that the only time the Israelite army lost a battle against pagan armies was when the Israelite nation was mixing pagan philosophies, religion and practices with the true worship of God.

In response to their defeat, the Israelites did not turn from the disobedience to God’s command. Instead they took the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh to be with them when they fought the Philistines again. 1 Samuel 4:3-4 records: ***“And when the people had come into camp, the elders of Israel said. ‘Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies.’ So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.”***

The Israelites did this either because they believed that the Ark itself carried God’s supernatural power or they were trying to force God into miraculously helping them.

But as 1 Samuel 4:6-18 reveals, the Philistines defeated the Israelites again. This time, the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. Psalm 78:56-61 states: ***“Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God, and did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their carved images. When God heard this, he was furious, and greatly abhorred Israel, so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he had placed among men, and delivered His strength***

¹ Exodus 29:26-28, Leviticus 3:3-4, 7:23-26, Numbers 18:18 and Deuteronomy 18:3.

into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand." The Philistines took the Ark to Ashdod and Ekron in Philistia (see 1 Samuel 6:1-7:1, 14:18 and 2 Samuel Chapter 67.

In Jeremiah 7:1-14 and 26:2-9, God had the prophet Jeremiah warn the people that He would do to the temple in Jerusalem like what He did to Shiloh in 1 Samuel 4:1-18. The reason for the comparison was the Judeans in Jeremiah's time had a similar attitude to:

1. God's presence in the temple to what the Israelites did in the High Priest Eli's time,
2. to turning from their known sins
3. and obeying the Ten Commandments and other Mosaic commands.

Jeremiah 26:2-6 states: *"Thus says the Lord: 'Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word. Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.' And you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord: 'If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you, to heed the words of My servants the prophets whom I sent to you, both rising up early and sending them (but you have not heeded), then I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.'"*

The Judeans were following false prophets and compromising religious leaders

Despite claiming to worship the Lord the people of Judah loved to listen to false prophets and follow religious leaders who followed their own ways. Jeremiah 5:30-31 records: *"An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?"*

The false prophets were having sex with their neighbour's wives (see Jeremiah 23:14 and 29:21-23). As Jeremiah 23:14 shows, they *"also strengthen the hands of evildoers"*. Like the founder of the modern wicked ethical philosophy of situational ethics, Episcopalian Reverend Joseph Fletcher, these false prophets strengthened the hands of evildoers by giving them "good" reasons for having sex outside of heterosexual marriage, stealing and telling lies.

The prophets and priests were prophesying peace and blessings for the nation of Judah, despite their lack of true Biblical repentance. Jeremiah 6:13-15 states: *"Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down, says the Lord."*

Jeremiah 8:10-11 says similar words. Jeremiah 14:13-14 records: *"Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, the prophets say to them, 'You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.'" And the Lord said to me, 'The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to*

them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.”

In Jeremiah 23:11, Jeremiah said: *“For both prophet and priest are profane; yes, in My house I have found their wickedness, says the Lord.”*

Jeremiah also records the following which God told him about the false prophets of Judah. Jeremiah 23:14 and 16-17 says: *“Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; they also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah... Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The Lord has said, ‘You shall have peace,’” And to everyone who walks according to the imagination of his own heart.”*

In Jeremiah 23:25 and 32, Jeremiah records that these prophets were having dreams which they were claiming falsely were from God: *“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!... Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,’ says the Lord, ‘and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,’ says the Lord.”*

In Jeremiah 23:22, God revealed that true prophets turn people from their wicked practices: *“But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings.”*

The false prophet Hananiah was so persistent that even after Jeremiah’s prophecies were fulfilled and Judeans were exiled to Babylon, he prophesied the Judeans would return to Jerusalem in 2 years instead of Jeremiah 70 years (see Jeremiah 28:1-11 and 29:1-10). Because of his false prophecies God punished Hananiah with death (see Jeremiah 28:12-17).

The Judeans were so deceived and ruled by sin that they assumed that their compromising priests were teaching the Law of Moses correctly, their false prophets were hearing from God and Jeremiah was an evil person. Jeremiah 18:22 records what these Judeans said: *“Let a cry be heard from their houses, when You bring a troop suddenly upon them; for they have dug a pit to take me, and hidden snares for my feet.”*

God’s anger against sinners and their sins

God loves all people, even the most wicked (see John 3:16 and Romans 5:8). But God is also very angry with all unbelieving sinners every day. Psalm 7:11 states: *“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”*

The Book of Jeremiah refers to God’s anger or wrath against sinners and their evil actions 44 times and His fury against them and their sins 16 times. For example read Jeremiah 7:20: *“Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place – on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground. And it will burn and not be quenched”* and Jeremiah 21:5-6: *“I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a strong arm, even in anger and fury and great wrath. I will strike the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they shall die of a great pestilence.”*

This great emphasis on God's anger and fury against evildoers and their wicked action in the Book of Jeremiah was a result of the Judeans':

- lack of real faith in and love for God.
- massive compromising with contemporary pagan philosophies, practices and ethical standards.
- refusal to obey many of the commands and instructions of the Mosaic Covenant.
- refusal to turn from their known sins back to Him.

Jeremiah 7:11 shows that God's prophet can become so full of God's message about His anger and resulting punishment that they end up very angry about the attitudes and actions of evildoers: *"Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in Your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, says the Lord."*

Jeremiah warned the Judeans of punishment

The prophet Jeremiah warned the people of Judah that God said He would definitely punish them if they did not turn to Him and turn from their evil ways. In Jeremiah 11:3, Jeremiah warned them of being cursed with the curses listed in the Mosaic Covenant (see Leviticus 26:14-39 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68). In Jeremiah 21:14, God warned the people of Judah: *"But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings", says the Lord; 'I will kindle a fire in its forest, and it shall devour all things around it.'"*

God's solution to the Judeans' dreadful situation

Jeremiah continually told the Israelites that there was only one solution to their dreadful state. This solution involved:

- trusting in the Lord. In Jeremiah 17:7, God states: *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord."*
- Turning from their known sins to God and amending or changing their ways and actions (see Jeremiah 3:1, 3:7, 3:12, 3:14, 3:22, 4:1, 5:3, 7:3, 7:5, 8:4, 15:7, 15:19, 18:8, 18:11, 23:14, 24:17, 25:5, 26:3, 26:13 and 35:15. Jeremiah 35:15 records that through Jeremiah, God said to the Judeans: *"I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers'. But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me."*
- As a *fruit* of the above turning from known sins to God, beginning to obey the voice of the Lord found in the Law of Moses (see Jeremiah 12:17). Jeremiah 26:13 states God told the princes and people of Judah that God said: *"Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; then the Lord will relent concerning the doom that he has pronounced against you."*

In Jeremiah 36:2-3, God told Jeremiah that He would graciously and mercifully forgive the Judeans if they turned from their evil lives back to God: *“Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, even the days of Josiah even to this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.”*

Hypocritical versions of turning from known sins to God

Many of the Judeans had previously claimed to have turned to the Lord but they did not do it with all their hearts. So God regarded their supposed turning to Him as a pretense. Jeremiah 3:10 states: *“And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,” says the Lord.*”

The Judeans were willing to fast before the Lord. Jeremiah 36:9 states: *“Now it came to pass in the fifth year of Jeroiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem.”* But these Judeans were not willing to turn from their known sins and to amend their ways and actions.

The people of Judea were also pleased to ask God’s prophet to pray for them (see Jeremiah 37:3 and 42:1-2). But the Judeans who asked for prayer did not want to turn from these sins, amend their actions and obey God. In Jeremiah 42:20-21, Jeremiah told many of them: *“For you were hypocrites in your hearts when you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, ‘Pray for us to the Lord our God, and according to all that the Lord your God says, so declare to us and we will do it.’ And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, or anything which He has sent you by me.”*

The people of Judea were also willing to give generous offerings to the Lord. Jeremiah 6:19-20 declares: *“Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not heeded My words, nor My law, but rejected it. For what purpose to Me comes frankincense from Sheba, and sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet to Me.”*

Jeremiah 14:12 states: *“When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.”*

But as Jeremiah 5:3 reveals the people of Judah refused to return to God from their sins: *“...But they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return.”* Jeremiah 18:11-12 records: *“Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.”’ And they said, ‘That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.’”*

Jeremiah's emphasis on obedience

The Book of Jeremiah does not teach that believers will be declared righteous by God through either:

- perfect obedience to the Mosaic Law or
- a mixture of faith in God and obedience to the Mosaic Law.

But the Book of Jeremiah does emphasise that God expected His people living under the Mosaic Covenant to obey the commands and instructions of the Mosaic Law.²

The Mosaic Covenant had many instructions for God's people to obtain forgiveness for any of the disobediences to the commands and instructions of the Mosaic Law. So the Mosaic Covenant does not teach that God would only declare as righteous a person who was perfectly obedient to the Law's commands every moment of every day.

God holds all nations accountable for their attitudes and actions

Jeremiah Chapters 46-51 reveal that God also judges and punishes nations who are not under the Mosaic Covenant and Law. Examples of these nations were Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Arabia, Elam and Babylon.

But note in Jeremiah 18:7-10, God reveals the principles by which He judges each nation: *“The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.”*

Throughout the Book of Jeremiah, the phrase *“the Lord of hosts”* is written 81 times. This expression relates to God's Supreme Rule over all humans and angels throughout history and eternity.

The expression *“the Lord of hosts”* is used 21 times in Jeremiah Chapters 46-51 in relation to His absolute rule over every nation on Earth.

The broken Mosaic Covenant and unconditional Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant promises

God punished the nation of Israel in 722 B.C. for breaking the Mosaic Covenant (see 2 Kings 17:5-23). In 586 B.C., God punished the nation of Judah for breaking the same covenant (see Jeremiah 11:1-8)

But despite this, God's *unconditional* promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Abrahamic Covenant about giving them the Land of Canaan as a permanent possession remained unchanged (see Genesis 12:7, 15:18-21, 17:8, 24:7 and 28:13). These promises were

² See Jeremiah 3:13, 3:25, 7:23, 9:13, 11:4, 11:7, 11:8, 12:17, 17:23, 18:10, 26:13, 32:23, 38:20, 40:3, 42:6 (twice), 42:13, 42:21, 43:4, 43:7 and 44:23.

not conditional on whether some or many generations of their descendants had saving faith in God and not on whether as a fruit of this faith in God they obeyed the Mosaic Law or not. God's Words in Jeremiah 51:5 relate to this: ***“For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah, by his God, the Lord of hosts, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.”***

God's unmerited grace and mercy to the future Israelites and Judeans is also recorded in Jeremiah Chapters 31-33 and 46:27-28. Note in Jeremiah 33:19-26, God stresses that He will not break the unconditional grace promises made to the nation of Israel in the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenants.

God's conditional promises found in the Mosaic Covenant are only fulfilled if humans fulfil the conditions. But God's unconditional promises in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants will be fulfilled regardless of human response.

The Judeans interpreted the Davidic Covenant unbiblically

After the time King Josiah died, the kings and many of the people of Judah began to believe the wicked false doctrine that God would bless and prosper these kings of Judah, the nation of Judah and the city of Jerusalem:

- solely because of the unconditional grace promises of the Davidic Covenant. The Davidic Covenant is mentioned in 2 Samuel 7:1-17, 1 Kings 8:23-26, 1 Chronicles 17:1-15, Psalm 89:3-4, 89:26-37, 132:17-18, Isaiah 55:3-4, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:21, Ezekiel 34:23-24 and 37:24-25.
- regardless of how disobedient the king and nation of Judea and the people of Jerusalem were to the laws and commands of the Mosaic Covenant.

In Jeremiah 21:11-22:10, God led the prophet Jeremiah to challenge the kings of Judah who were David's descendants about the necessity of them obeying the Mosaic Covenant as a fruit of their faith in Him. In these verses, God uses the phrases ***“O house of David”***, ***“you who sit on the throne of David”*** and ***“kings who sit on the throne of David”*** in connection with His commands to them about living rightly to show these leaders that even though they were under the grace-based Davidic Covenant, God expected them to live rightly.

Jeremiah 22:1-5 warned the Davidic kings not to abuse God's grace but to live righteous lives or in future suffer His punishments: ***“Thus says the Lord: ‘Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word, and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates!’” Thus says the Lord: ‘Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. For if you indeed do this thing, then shall enter the gates of this house, riding on horses and in chariots, accompanied by servants and people, kings who sit on the throne of David. But if will not hear these words, I swear by Myself’, says the Lord, ‘That this house shall become a desolation.’”***

Previously in the mid-900's B.C., God had told Solomon that some aspects of the Davidic Covenant were conditional on whether the Davidic kings were faithful and obedient to God. 1 Kings 9:4-8 records: ***“Now if you walk before me as your father David walked, in***

integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel'. But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will be exalted; yet everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house.'"

In Jeremiah 22:30, God told the Davidic kings of Judah that He would no longer prosper them: ***"Thus says the Lord: 'Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.'"*** This is despite His promises to the Davidic kings of Israel under the Davidic Covenant.

In Jeremiah 23:5-6, God promised to provide a king who would be a descendant of David who would be perfectly righteous, act righteously in everything He would do and be prospered by God: ***"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."*** This prophecy was of Jesus Christ, the descendant of David and the Lord our Righteousness.

God prospered Jehoiakim out of unmerited grace and not as a reward

Out of His unmerited grace and mercy, God prospered Jehoiakim, the wicked king of Judah. This was even though Jehoiakim had never obeyed the Lord's voice. Jeremiah 22:21 records: ***"I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, 'I will not hear.' This has been your manner from your youth, that you did not obey My voice."***

God had prospered Jehoiakim even though he had killed many innocent people, practiced violence and oppression, was extremely covetous and had murdered one of God's prophets (see Jeremiah 22:17 and 26:20-23). As Jesus said in Luke 6:35: ***"...for He is kind to the unthankful and evil."*** Like many people who live evil lives but are prospered by God, Jehoiakim refused to listen to God (see Jeremiah 22:21)

Jeremiah 12:1-2 records that Jeremiah could not understand how a perfectly righteous and just God could prosper the wicked on Earth: ***"Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You; yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; they grow, yes, they bear fruit. You are near in their mouth but far from their mind."***

But in Jeremiah 12:3-13, the Lord revealed that in future He will punish wicked prosperous people who refuse to turn to Him from their sins.

The fact that King Jehoiakim was a descendant of King David, was enjoying great prosperity but was living a very sinful life in disobedience to God's commands gave credibility to the wicked popular belief that God by His grace would prosper the nation of Judah under its

Davidic Covenant rulers regardless of how disobedient they were to the Ten Commandments and other commands of the Mosaic Covenant.

Similarly just because a nation, an individual, a local church, a group of churches or a preacher is prospering greatly at present is no guarantee that God approves of their actions.

God's prophets sometimes feel how He feels

When God gives His messages to His prophets, He often desires His prophets to feel how He feels about various people and situations. For example, in Jeremiah 14:17-18, God said He wanted Jeremiah to cry about the people of Judah being killed by war and famine.

This is similar to when Jesus cried about the fact the people of Jerusalem were going to be killed or maltreated by the Romans (see Luke 19:41-44).

Public rebukes of political leaders, religious leaders and others

In many modern countries, there are laws against the defamation and slandering of the character and actions of another person in printed form. Even if what you say about another person is true, the person can sue you for damages.

Such laws protect people from having their reputations destroyed by lies. But these laws also prevent individuals or groups from warning the general public of the activities of known rapists, paedophiles, drug dealers and thieves.

Because of the above defamation and slander laws and sometimes Biblically unbalanced view of verses like some Christians have the wrong impression that it is sinful for God's prophet to ever publicly rebuke political leaders, religious leaders or others about the wicked attitudes and actions.

But note the Book of Jeremiah records that God called Jeremiah to publicly rebuke King Jehoiachim (22:13-19 and 36:1-33), King Zedekiah (29:20-23), the prophet Hananiah (28:1-17) and the false prophets Ahab, Zedekiah and Shemaiah (29:20-32). Also God told Samuel to publicly rebuke King Saul (see 1 Samuel 13:1-15); the prophet Nathan to publicly correct King David (see 2 Samuel 12:1-15) and the prophet Micaiah to rebuke King Ahab in public (see 2 Chronicles 18:1-27). God led Paul the Apostle to write public rebukes of the Apostle Peter (see Galatians 2:11-14) and Hymenaeus, Philetus and Alexander the coppersmith (see 1 Timothy 1:20, 2 Timothy 2:17-18 and 4:14). In 3 John 9-10, the Apostle John publicly corrected a man called Diotrephes and his actions in the church.

The above does not give every Christian the right to publicly rebuke political leaders, religious leaders and others. But the above does show that God did sometimes under the Mosaic and New Covenant lead some of His leaders to publicly correct certain individuals.

The first punishment was a famine

As we see in Leviticus 26:14-39, God promised to punish the nation of Israel with progressively worsening sufferings if they refused to turn from their sin and to obey His commands. Note especially verses 18, 21, 23-24 and 27-28.

Jeremiah 14:1-9 records that God sent a famine as the first punishment on the nation of Judea during Jeremiah's time. But later God sent other punishments on them after they did not

turn from their sins (see Jeremiah Chapters 39, 44 and 52). They ignored God's first warning given through famine. Also they refused to listen to the many warnings given by the prophet Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah and Ezekiel from late 800's B.C. till the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Other important teachings in Jeremiah

Other important teachings found in the Book of Jeremiah are:

1. God appoints certain humans as prophets (see Jeremiah 1:5). No human can decide themselves to be a prophet of God (see Jeremiah 14:14-15, 23:16-21, 23:32, 27:14-15 and 29:8-9). Those who choose themselves to be His prophets will be false prophets (see Jeremiah 14:14-15, 23:32, 29:8-9 and Ezekiel 13:1-23).
2. True prophets of God will have God's Word burning in their hearts like fire (see Jeremiah 20:9).
3. God's prophets are often insulted because of the Words of God which they speak (see Jeremiah 20:8).
4. Compromising religious leaders and false prophets may wish to harm, put in prison or even kill God's true prophets (see Jeremiah 20:1-2, 26:8-11, 37:15 and 38:1-13).
5. God often permits false prophets to operate their deceptive ministries for years. But in the end, He will punish them (see Jeremiah 28:1-17 and 29:24-32).
6. True prophets if God feel great sadness and other deep emotions about the punishments which God reluctantly imposes on unrepentant hearts (see Jeremiah 4:19 and 8:21).
7. There can reach a point in the lives of groups or individuals in which God tells us no longer to pray for them (see Jeremiah 7:16 and 11:14). In Jeremiah 15:1-6, God said that the intercessions of Moses and Samuel would not change His mind about punishing the people of Judea at that time. This is rare, however, because mostly God wishes for us to intercede for others (see Jeremiah 7:16, 11:14 and 14:11).
8. God's answer to Jeremiah's fears and insecurities was, ***"Do not be afraid of their faces. For I am with you to deliver you..."*** (see Jeremiah 1:8).
9. God does not want humans to boast in their own wisdom, strength, money or material possessions but in Him. Jeremiah 9:23-24 commands: ***"Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glorifies glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord."***
10. In Jeremiah 17:9, God reveals the true nature of all human hearts without Him: ***"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"***
11. God does not want humans to depend primarily on themselves or other humans. Jeremiah 17:5 states: ***"Thus says the Lord: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes his flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.'"***
12. No matter how wise or intelligent a person is, they are not wise enough to direct their own lives without God's wisdom and guidance. Jeremiah 10:23 states: ***"O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps."***

13. God uses signs in our circumstances as confirmation of what His Spirit has already put in our hearts (see Jeremiah 32:6-8).
14. There would be a New Covenant which would replace the Old or Mosaic Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31-34).
15. Once the period of the exile in Babylon commenced, God commanded the Judeans to remain in Babylon until the 70 years time period for exile was fulfilled (see Jeremiah 25:11-12, 27:10 and 42:1-22).
16. Jeremiah's ministry involved preaching salvation by God's grace and mercy and His punishment of unrepentant evildoers. Jeremiah continually challenged, rebuked, corrected, exhorted and warned the nation of Judah and its political and religious leaders.