

5. Jeremiah

- Jeremiah, like Ezekiel and Zechariah, was both a prophet and a priest. Jeremiah's ministry spanned the final five decades of Judah's history. His call to service came in 627 B.C. in the thirteenth year of King Josiah (1:2), Judah's last good king. Jeremiah compiled his prophecies in stages, but did not compile them chronologically. For more than forty years he faithfully proclaimed God's judgment on apostate Judah, all the while enduring opposition, beatings, and imprisonment. When the Babylonians took Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in 586 B.C., Jeremiah was freed from prison and given the choice of going to Babylon or remaining in Jerusalem. He chose the latter, but was soon abducted and taken to Egypt by Jews who were fleeing from the Babylonians. In Egypt, Jeremiah prophesied a few more years and apparently died there.

*Jeremiah 23; The coming Messiah, the righteous Branch (23:1-8)

- The Messiah will reign as king during the Millennium. "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely... and this is His name... 'The LORD our righteousness'" (23:1-6).

*Jeremiah 25; 70-year prophecies, Babylon's judgment and end times described (25:1-38)

- The word that came to Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, 605 B.C.) he spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He warned them to turn from their evil ways and to not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them, but the people did not listen (25:1-7). "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' declares the LORD, 'and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation'" (25:8-9).

- "This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (25:11). "'Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation'" (25:12). This 70-year period of judgment began with Babylon's first invasion of Jerusalem (approximately September, 605 B.C.), when King Jehoiakim (of Judah) agreed to serve as a vassal king for Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:1; 605 B.C.). At this time Daniel and his companions were taken to Babylon as captives. Some of the vessels from the house of God (temple) were also taken to Babylon and placed in a Babylonian temple (Daniel 1:1-6). Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion of Jerusalem in 597 B.C. resulted in 10,000 captives being led away into exile to Babylon (2 Kings 24:8-20). During the third invasion by Babylon, Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was burned and the city walls were broken down in 586 B.C. The people who survived were carried away into exile, except for some of the poorest of the land (2 Kings 25:1-12; Jeremiah 34:1-7, 39:1-10, 52:1-30). The rule of

Babylon ended suddenly in 539 B.C. (October) when the Persians captured the city of Babylon and King Belshazzar (Babylon's last king) was killed (Daniel 5:28-31). From Babylon's first invasion of Jerusalem (605 B.C.) to Belshazzar's death (539 B.C.) is a period of approximately 66 years. This falls four years short of fulfilling the 70-year prophecies. Since God's Word never fails, we must conclude that these prophecies will be fulfilled in two phases. In a similar fashion, the Daniel 9, 70-weeks prophecies will be fulfilled in three phases, with the third phase representing the seven-year Great Tribulation. The first phase of Jeremiah 25 applies to ancient Babylon and the second phase applies to end-time Babylon the Great and her king, the beast (antichrist; Daniel 11:36). The duration of phase two is about four years, the amount of time that the nations will serve the antichrist during the last portion of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 13:5-8, 17:12-13). These two time periods add up to 70 years and therefore will fulfill the prophecies of Jeremiah 25:11-12. At the second coming of Christ, the nations will have served the king of Babylon 70 years and the king and his empire will be judged by God (Revelation 16:19, 19:19-21). This means that the antichrist (beast) must become the king and supreme ruler of Babylon the Great approximately three years after the beginning of the Great Tribulation. This makes sense because Babylon the Great begins as a global empire ruled by 10 kings and the antichrist is not one of the original 10 (Daniel 7). These kings will fall one by one as the antichrist rises to power. Until the antichrist becomes the supreme ruler, Babylon the Great will not be considered an instrument of judgment against the Jews and will not be counted toward the 70-year judgment period. For more information about Babylon the Great, refer to section 44.

- What is the significance of 70 years and why is this time span used in several other Bible prophecies (Jeremiah 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Daniel 9:2; Zechariah 1:12, 7:5; Isaiah 23:15-17)? According to 2 Chronicles 36:20-21, this was the number of years that the people had failed to observe God's law of a "sabbath rest" for the land. God told the sons of Israel that every seventh year, the land was to have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord. The people were not to sow their fields or prune their vineyards (Leviticus 25:1-5). They would have to trust the Lord to provide for their needs for that year. If the people would fail to follow this command, God would remove them from the land to enforce this "sabbath rest" (Leviticus 26:33-35). For hundreds of years the nation disobeyed God by ignoring this command. This resulted in a 70-year judgment that would allow the land to enjoy its "sabbath rest". For additional information, refer to section 54 (The 70-Year Bible Prophecies).

- Notice that in the verses following Jeremiah 25:12, God's judgment is experienced by all inhabitants of the earth. This passage (Jeremiah 25:13-38) can only apply to the end-time Great Tribulation, the war of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ. The nations will "stagger and go mad" after drinking the wine of the wrath of God (25:15-16). The Lord declares, "I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth" (25:29). "He is entering into judgment with all flesh" (25:31). "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, evil is going forth from nation to nation, and a great storm is being stirred up from the remotest parts of the earth'" (25:32). "Those slain by the LORD on that day will be from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be lamented, gathered or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground" (25:33). These verses describe the multitudes that will be killed during the war of Armageddon.

*Jeremiah 29; Letter to the exiles, 70-year prophecy, end times, return to Jerusalem (29:1-32)

- "Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon" (29:1). Jeremiah's letter was written after the deportation of King Jeconiah (also called Jehoiachin or Coniah) and many others in 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:8-15). The exiles were encouraged to live as normal a life as possible and to await God's deliverance (29:1-14).

- "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place'" (29:10). "'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope'" (29:11). This 70-year period is the same period that is mentioned in the prophecies of Jeremiah 25:11-12 that will apparently be fulfilled in two phases. The first phase began with Babylon's first invasion of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. and ended when the Persians captured the city of Babylon in 539 B.C. The second phase applies to the last portion of the Great Tribulation. Notice how similar the wording is to Jeremiah 25:12; "when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation". Since Judah and the surrounding nations served the king of Babylon approximately 66 years, the 70-year completion for Babylon must also include a reign of approximately four years for the king and supreme ruler (antichrist) of Babylon the Great during the last portion of the Great Tribulation (refer to Jeremiah 25 and 2 Chronicles 36). At the second coming of Christ, the Lord will bring the Jewish people back to Jerusalem from all the nations where they were led captive (Luke 21:24) and from their Tribulation safe haven (Matthew 24:15-22; Revelation 12:6, 14) and "will restore" Israel's "fortunes" (29:14; see also 32:44, 33:7, 11, 26). Concerning the phrase, "fulfill My good word to you", a similar phrase is used by Jeremiah, where the Lord says, "I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (33:14). This "good word" includes the Messiah (righteous Branch of David) ruling on earth during the millennial kingdom (33:14-18). "In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness" (33:16). For additional information, refer to section 54 (The 70-Year Bible Prophecies).

*Jeremiah 30; Israel's rebirth (30:3); the Great Tribulation (30:4-8); end times and Millennium (30:9-24)

- The Great Tribulation is described as "the time of Jacob's distress", where the sound of terror and dread is heard, where there is no peace, where faces turn pale, and where people experience pain, as if in childbirth (30:4-8). "Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it" (30:7). "But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them" (30:9). David will rule as king of Israel during the Millennium. "For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you" (30:11). "The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has performed

and until He has accomplished the intent of His heart; in the latter days you will understand this" (30:24).

***Jeremiah 31; Restoration for Israel and the New Covenant (31:1-40)**

- The principal Old Testament passage on the New Covenant is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people... for they shall all know Me... for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34). This covenant is confirmed elsewhere in the Old Testament and is stated to be eternal and unconditional (Isaiah 61:8-9; Ezekiel 16:60). "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). God's promises to Israel include the forgiveness of sins, the indwelling Spirit and a new heart (Joel 2:28-32). Jesus' sacrifice was the beginning of the New Covenant (Luke 22:20; Matthew 26:27-28; Hebrews 8:6-13; 1 Corinthians 11:25-26; 2 Corinthians 3:6). While believers today enjoy the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant (forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit), the specific promises in Jeremiah 31:31-34 are "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" and will find their ultimate fulfillment for Israel when Jesus Christ returns and sets up His millennial kingdom.

***Jeremiah 32; Restoration for Israel and an everlasting covenant (32:1-44)**

- "Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger... and I will bring them back to this place... They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart" (32:37-39). "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me" (32:40). At the second coming of Christ, the Lord will bring back the Jewish people to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:10). The "everlasting covenant" that God will make with His people is the New Covenant described in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

***Jeremiah 33; Restoration promised (33:1-13); millennial kingdom (33:14-26)**

- In this chapter, the future restoration of Jerusalem is promised and the millennial kingdom is described. "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth" (33:14-15). This "righteous Branch of David" is the Messiah.

***Jeremiah 50; Prophecies against Babylon (50:1-46)**

- Jeremiah was to "declare and proclaim among the nations" that "Babylon has been captured... Marduk has been shattered" (50:2). Babylon fell to the Persians in 539 B.C. and Marduk was the

chief god of Babylon. "For a nation has come up against her out of the north; it will make her land an object of horror, and there will be no inhabitant in it. Both man and beast have wandered off, they have gone away" (50:3). Several details in this chapter indicate that this prophecy does not apply exclusively to ancient Babylon. First, when Cyrus of Persia took Babylon he did not "make her land an object of horror" or destroy the city so that "there will be no inhabitant in it". Several times Jeremiah repeated this fact about Babylon being without inhabitants (50:39-40, 51:29, 37, 43, 62). The city was spared and made one of the ruling centers for the Persian Empire with Daniel serving there in an administrative position (Daniel 6:1-3). Second, no one fled the city when it fell (51:6). Third, the promise that "in those days and at that time" Israel and Judah will seek the Lord to "join themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant" was not fulfilled after Babylon's fall (50:4-5). Apparently Jeremiah's prophecy looks beyond the defeat of ancient Babylon in 539 B.C. to end-time Babylon the Great (Jeremiah 51; Revelation 17-18). The defeat of Babylon the Great and the antichrist will be the climax of God's judgment on the Gentile powers.

*Jeremiah 51; Babylon judged for sins against Israel (51:1-64)

- Prophecies against ancient Babylon and end-time Babylon the Great are continued from chapter 50 of Jeremiah. The passage beginning with verse 6 (51:6-10) appears to be predominately describing future Babylon the Great. This Babylon is very similar to the end-time Babylon the Great described in Revelation (Revelation 14:8, 17:1-18, 18:1-24). First, God's people are told to flee from Babylon to save their life when Babylon is judged (51:6, 45). God's people did not flee when the Persians defeated Babylon because they were not in danger. God's people are told to come out of Babylon the Great so that they would not participate in her sins or receive of her plagues or judgment (Revelation 18:4, 8, 21). Second, "Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad" (51:7-8). A similar description of Babylon the Great appears in Revelation, "having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, 'BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH'" (Revelation 17:4-5). The kings of the earth will be made drunk with the wine of her immorality (Revelation 17:2, 14:8, 18:3). Jeremiah says the nations will "stagger and go mad" after drinking the wine of the wrath of God (Jeremiah 25:15-16). Third, the fall of Babylon (51:8) is also prophesied for Babylon the Great (Revelation 14:8, 18:2, 21). After Babylon falls, some will "wail over her" and try and heal her (51:8). The kings of the earth and the merchants of the earth will weep and lament over Babylon the Great when they see the smoke of her burning (Revelation 18:9-19). Fourth, many will leave Babylon and "each go to his own country" (51:9), since Babylon the Great is comprised of many nations. Fifth, "her judgment has reached to heaven and towers up to the very skies" (51:9). Notice the similarity to Babylon the Great, "for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (Revelation 18:5).

- The Babylon that "destroys the whole earth" and later "will be desolate forever" (51:25-26) is probably a description of Babylon the Great. Daniel says that Babylon the Great "will devour the

whole earth and tread it down and crush it" (Daniel 7:23). The Babylon that God has used in the past and will use again as a "war-club" to "shatter nations" and "destroy kingdoms" (51:20-23) will be judged so severely in the end times that not even a stone will be taken from it to rebuild elsewhere (51:26).

- "How Babylon has become an object of horror among the nations! The sea has come up over Babylon; she has been engulfed with its tumultuous waves" (51:41-42). "For the LORD is going to destroy Babylon, and He will make her loud noise vanish from her. And their waves will roar like many waters; the tumult of their voices sounds forth" (51:55). These verses appear to be describing judgment on the end-time great city of Babylon the Great since ancient Babylon was not near the ocean. In Revelation, this future great city is described as having a seaport (Revelation 18:17-19) and is pictured as a great millstone that will be thrown into the sea with violence and "will not be found any longer" (Revelation 18:21).