

Teaching notes, Jeremiah 30-52; Lamentations

Chalkboard (just the labels and first line to start):

Date	Babylon	Egypt	Judah	Jeremiah
640	(ruled by Assyria)	Psammetichos	Josiah	
627	Nabopolassar			Called
609		Necho II	Jehoahaz; Jehoiakim	Arrested
604	Nebuchadrezzar			Pashur
597			Jehoiachin; Zedekiah	(Lehi)
594		Psammetichos II (595)		Hananiah
588		Apries/Hophra (589)		
586			Jerusalem fell	
585			Gedaliah; Johanan	Egypt

589? (Jeremiah was 56?); 30-31

Sometime during the reign of Zedekiah (perhaps in 589), the Lord told Jeremiah to write down some words about the restoration of Israel ([30:1-2](#)). Though still condemnatory of Judah's sins, the words must have been of some comfort to the prophet and those who believed his words.

- A day of restoration would come, even though men were in pain like a woman giving birth ([30:3, 6-8](#)). "I will bring again the captivity" ([30:3, 18](#)) or similar in many other verses is common in Jeremiah but is better rendered 'I will turn back [reverse] the captivity.' Most used in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.
- **JST** changes reverse the meaning of [30:12-16](#). Not all changes are in the footnotes but enough to get the sense.
- [30:22](#) "my people" captures the renewed promise of the Lord, who first used this phrase of Israel in the Exodus.
- Not only Judah but the northern kingdom of Israel is promised redemption, though they've been gone for over 130 years ([31:1-6](#)).
- Matthew quoted [31:15](#) in Matthew 2:18 (Herod killing the young boys in Bethlehem). "Ramah" was a town about 5 miles north of Jerusalem (near Gibeah) and "Rahel" is Jacob's wife, Rachel, the mother of Joseph (northern kingdom) and Benjamin (southern kingdom).
- A beautiful prophesy of the covenant of the last days is in [31:31-34](#), resulting in all men knowing God.

587 (Jeremiah = 58); 32-33

These chapters date to 587, or the "tenth year of Zedekiah" ([32:1](#)). This was the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians that destroyed the city ([32:2](#)). More about Jeremiah's situation in later chapters.

- Jeremiah was commanded by the Lord to 'redeem' his cousin's land ([32:9-15](#)). It does not say why Hanameel had to sell the land nor why he came to Jeremiah in prison to buy it but the law was to keep land in the family, which Jeremiah did. With the Babylonian siege, this would be highly unusual and land values would be at a minimum. His "seventeen shekels of silver" would be worth about \$250 at today's prices. Jeremiah did this as a sign that Israel and Judah would be redeemed by the Lord ([32:36-41, 44](#)).

588-586 (Jeremiah = 57-59); 34-45

These chapters are more or less a chronological history of the fall of Jerusalem (chapters 35-36 and 45 are flashbacks to previous events that relate to the topics at hand).

- They start with the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (**34:1**), during which Jeremiah was thrown into prison in the palace because he told the king Jerusalem would fall (**34:2-5**).
- Babylon first laid siege to Jerusalem in 588, then left when Egypt came up to attack them from the south; they defeated Egypt and then returned to the siege but for a time, it looked like Jerusalem might escape, so Jeremiah's words seemed to be false. Also, Zedekiah had requested that all Hebrew slaves be freed during the first siege (**34:8-9**) but when the army left, the leaders reneged and put them back into bondage (**34:11**), which Jeremiah condemned (rest of chapter 34).
- 35 is a flashback of an encounter with the **Rechabites** during the time of Jehoiakim (perhaps 600 BC). During an early Babylonian and Syrian attack on Judah, these nomadic folks fled to the safety of the city. Jeremiah tested them by offering them wine, which they had sworn off based on an oath their ancestor had made, then commended them for their faithfulness to the oath in contrast to Judah who had broken the covenant with the Lord.
- 36 is another flashback to an event in 605 BC with **Jehoiakim**. Jeremiah was commanded to write his words in a scroll and had Baruch help him do that (**36:2-4**). Because Jeremiah was imprisoned, he also asked Baruch to read his words at the temple (**36:5-6**), which he did in 604 BC (**36:9-10**). Many were affected by the words and asked Baruch for the scroll so they could read it to the king. They took it to his 'winter house' (perhaps in Jericho) and read it to him but he burned it (**36:20-23**). Jeremiah was commanded to write his words again and this time to add a condemnation of Jehoiakim (**36:27-32**).
- Both of these flashbacks held set the stage for the destruction of Jerusalem, showing how the people rejected their covenant with the Lord and how the leaders of the people did nothing to combat the unrighteousness.
- While Egypt was fighting Babylon (and thus the siege on Jerusalem was temporarily lifted, **37:3-5**), Jeremiah taught that the Babylonians would return (37:7-8). During the break, Jeremiah left town to go home for a visit, but an army leader thought he was going to meet with the Babylonians to give them information, so arrested him (**37:12-14**). Jeremiah confronted the leaders who put him in prison (**37:15**). Zedekiah secretly brought him out to see him but Jeremiah only repeated his message (**37:17**). Still, the king kept him from that other prison and put him under house arrest in the royal prison with food to eat (**37:21**).
- As Jeremiah continued to teach his message, he angered the leaders more and they accused him of treason before the king, who gave in to their pressure and let them take Jeremiah (**38:4-5**). They put him in the bottom of a **cistern** ("dungeon") in the '**target yard**' of the son of the king named **Malchiah** (*Malkiyahu* in Hebrew, **38:6**). Several have noted that this could well be **Mulek** of The Book of Mormon as the names are the same (simply removing the theophoric *yahu*). A servant of the king (the meaning of "**Ebed-melech**") pulled him out and Jeremiah remained under the protection of the king and his son in the target yard until the city was taken (**38:28**).
- While in the target yard, Zedekiah secretly questioned Jeremiah, who told the king that if he surrendered to the Babylonians, all would be well (**38:17-18**). But the king feared the other leaders and did nothing (**38:24-25**).
- Chapter 39 tells of the destruction of Jerusalem, giving specific dates (the siege started in Jan 588; the city was captured on 18 Jul 586; **39:1-2**); the names of the Babylonian leaders who conquered it (**39:3**); Zedekiah's attempted escape and capture (**39:4-5**); his and his family's fate (**39:5-7**); the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (**39:8-10**). Somehow **Nebuchadrezzar** had heard of Jeremiah and ordered him freed and given to the newly appointed governor, **Gedaliah**, but not before Jeremiah had been taken away in chains then freed and given the choice to go to Babylon or with Gedaliah (**40:1-6**).
- Gedaliah made his headquarters in **Mizpah** on the east side of the Jordan River (**40:10**). He knew there were those who wanted to kill him but didn't believe the rumors; unfortunately, he was killed (**40:14-16**, **41:1-3**). Those left asked for Jeremiah's guidance (**42:1-3**) and Jeremiah prayed for ten days (**42:7**), then told them to

stay and not be afraid. They were thinking of going to Egypt, but Jeremiah said they would die there by the sword (**42:15-16**). The people did not believe him and went to Egypt, forcibly taking Jeremiah, Baruch his scribe, and Zedekiah's daughters (**43:5-6**).

- Chapter 44 is Jeremiah's prophesy to the people in Egypt, again telling them that the Lord would bring his judgments on them in Egypt, because they continued to worship false gods and goddesses (**44:12**; their reply is in **44:17-18**).
- Chapter 45 is a short flashback to an inspired promise of safety Jeremiah made to Baruch in 605 BC (because of Baruch's life being in danger in Egypt, this was a good time to mention it).

Various Dates; 46-51

These chapters are Jeremiah's prophecies against other nations, given at various times in his career (not always identifiable). We won't spend much time on these except to call out a couple of items.

- Three of the nations—Moab (**48:47**), Ammon (**49:6**), and Elam (**49:39**) receive the same promise as Israel and Judah—that their captivity will be ended in the latter days and they will be restored to their lands.
- Babylon gets two chapters and is promised to be destroyed for its wickedness (chapters 50-51). Much of the imagery of Jeremiah is used in the writings about Babylon in Revelation (a glance at the footnotes in 51 tells some of that story).
- There is a brief flashback at the end of 51. Jeremiah solicited the help of a servant of Zedekiah when the king and his leaders journeyed to Babylon in 593 to submit themselves to Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah wrote a scroll that condemned Babylon; his friend Seraiah read it in Babylon, declared that Babylon would be desolate forever, then wrapped it around a rock and threw it into the Euphrates River, which ran through the city, declaring the words to thus be final.

597-560 (Jeremiah = 48-85); 52

This chapter summarizes the events of the fall of Jerusalem, from the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah (597 BC) to near the end of the life of Jehoiachin in Babylon (560 BC).

Lamentations

Many Jews read the book of Lamentations on the [ninth day of Ab](#), which is the historical day Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians. Though the book does not mention Jeremiah, authorship is ascribed to him in the most ancient traditions, and scholars agree that the poetry was probably written shortly after the temple was destroyed.

Each chapter is a separate poem. Chapters 1-4 are acrostics, like Psalm 119 (though chapters 2-4 switch the order of two letters—*pe* and *ayin*). Thus each chapter has 22 phrases like the Hebrew alphabet (and 22 verses, except chapter 3 which has 66 because each letter gets three verses). Chapter 5 also has 22 verses even though it is not an acrostic.

Lamentations blames Judah's suffering on its wickedness and God's required judgments. Babylon is not even mentioned as the instrument of punishment—God is the author of it all. It portrays the challenges of the siege and captivity in dramatic and compelling terms. Here are some sample messages:

- **1:1-8** The sadness of the captivity and the cause of it.
- **2:1-5, 20-22** The Lord is responsible for the destruction.
- **3:50-57** Comfort to Jeremiah in his struggles.