

## Introduction to Jeremiah

1. Read the list of well-known and evocative quotes from Jeremiah. What would you add?
2. Jeremiah was important for the NT understanding of Jesus and God's plan for salvation, enough so that some even saw Jesus as the second coming of Jeremiah (Mt 16:14). For each of the following, decide whether the NT is (a) fulfilling, (b) echoing; or (c) applying Jeremiah: **Jer 31:15**/Mt 2:17-18; **Jer 4:4**/Rm 2:29; **Jer 31:31-34**/Lk 22:20; **Jer 6:16**/Mt 11:29; **Jer 7:11**/Mt 21:13; **Jer 5:21**/Mk 8:18. (See also **Jer 9:24**/1 Cor 1:31.)
3. Jeremiah's career began during the reign of Josiah, a hopeful time during which a scroll of Deuteronomy was famously found by Huldah, leading to a revival of worship and observance. However, after the fall of the northern kingdom, Judah was in a precarious position, sitting at a geopolitical crossroads but with little political or military strength to defend itself. Judah responded to the extreme pressure with a variety of sins.

In each of the passages below, *what sin is described?* What is the picture being drawn by Jeremiah of this people: are the sins of the common people different from those of the priests, political leaders, and prophets? Does any of this strike you as unusual?

- 5:1-2
  - 2:34; 5:25-29; 9:6-8; 22:1-3
  - 5:31; 6:14-15; 8:4
  - 5:26-27; 7:18, 31
  - 8:8; 6:13-14
  - 9:13-14
  - 7:9-11
4. How are their sins different from, or similar to, those of Americans or the American church?
  5. Listen to excerpt 3:30-10:30 from Tim Mackie's sermon, "Israel's Exile: Hitting Bottom," from the "Eat This Book" series<sup>1</sup>. Tim Mackie uses the example of his friend as an illustration of how anyone can, by a series of incremental choices, end up someplace they never thought they would be. Have you ever known anyone who has had a slow slide into sin? Is this a plausible way of understanding the American white evangelical church?

**Fun fact:** 2 Maccabees lists three otherwise unsupported traditions (cf. 2 Macc 2:1-8; 15:12-16): (a) That Jeremiah "exhorted those about to be deported to take some of the sacred fire from Jerusalem with them and not to forget God's commandments."; (b) That God told Jeremiah to hide the tabernacle, ark of the covenant, and the altar "in a cave at the mountain where Moses ascended to see God's 'inheritance.'" (c) That the high priest Onias saw a vision of a venerable Jeremiah as loved by Israel. (*IVP Dictionary of the Prophets*, "Jeremiah: History of Interpretation.")

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXGKgnv\\_RYU&list=WL&index=131&t=691s&pp=gAQBiAQB](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXGKgnv_RYU&list=WL&index=131&t=691s&pp=gAQBiAQB).

## Well-Known and Evocative Quotes from Jeremiah Chapters 1-28

Jeremiah 4:19: “My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh, the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent; for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.”<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah 6:16: “Thus says the Lord: Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”

Jeremiah 7:11: “Has this house, which is called by my name, become a *den of robbers* in your sight? I, too, am watching, says the Lord.”

Jeremiah 8:21-22: “For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken, I mourn, and horror has seized me. *Is there no balm in Gilead?* Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?”

Jeremiah 9:23-26: “Thus says the Lord: *Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom*; do not let the mighty boast in their might; do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth; but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord. The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will attend to all those who are circumcised only in the foreskin: Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all those with shaved temples who live in the desert. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is *uncircumcised in heart*.”

Jeremiah 11:19: “But I was like a gentle *lamb led to the slaughter*. And I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes, saying, ‘Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us *cut him off from the land of the living*, so that his name will no longer be remembered!’”

Jeremiah 13:17: “But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears because the Lord’s flock has been taken captive.” (Judah’s downfall was torture for Jeremiah.)

Jeremiah 13:23: “Can Cushites change their skin or *leopards their spots*? Then also you can do good, who are accustomed to do evil.”

Jeremiah 17:9-10: “*The heart is devious above all else*; it is perverse—who can understand it? *I the Lord test the mind and search the heart*, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.”

Jeremiah 23:5: “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David *a righteous Branch*, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

Jeremiah 22:15-16: “Are you a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. *He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me?* says the Lord.”

Jeremiah 23:28-29: “Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the Lord. *Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?*”

Jeremiah 2:5, 21, 26-27: “Thus says the Lord: What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me and went after worthless things *and became worthless themselves?* ... Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear.”

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<sup>2</sup> “More than any other biblical writer, Jeremiah evokes the sheer terror of military conquest from the victim’s point of view” (John Collins’ text on the OT).

## Background and Leader's Notes:

Some basic things to keep in mind:

- Jeremiah is a wild mixture of literature types, primarily sermonic, narrative, and prophetic
- (to be continued)

Below is an extra question based on a teaching by Jim Leffel of Dwell Community church (dwellcc.org).

1. Judah was engaging in idolatry in its most basic form, actually sacrificing to foreign gods. Idolatry is essentially seeking what only God can give from some other source. See the chart below, particularly the rightmost column. Do you find a lack in any of these area? Where do you most need support, whether from friends, the Church community, or God?

We seek	Fears that drive us	Things that heal the heart	What this healing feels like to you
Comfort	Stress	Gratitude	Open-handed living
Approval	Rejection	Truth-centered living	Real intimacy
Control	Uncertainty	Trust in God	Security
Impact	Failure	Faithfulness	Peace