

# God's Message to Us in Jeremiah

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## Introduction

Today in our sermon series on each book of the Bible, we come to Jeremiah.

- Jeremiah is the second of the books we call the Major Prophets.
- He began his ministry about 55 years after Isaiah... in 626 BC.
- He ministered in Judah until a year after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Perhaps you will remember that during Isaiah's ministry, the Assyrians wiped out many nations including Israel, but God stopped them at the gates of Jerusalem.

- He would not let them enter Jerusalem, just as Isaiah had prophesied.
- Nevertheless, Isaiah told Judah that in future years Babylon *would* destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and would take David's descendants off the throne into exile.
  - You will remember that Isaiah prepared the people for the future exile by telling them that the exile would not be the end.
  - God would pardon their sin and bring them back to Jerusalem and establish them again.
  - He told of the Son of Promise, the Son of David, who would be God and who would still come to bless them.

Now 55 years after these prophecies were given, Jeremiah comes on the scene and he also tells Judah that Babylon is going to overthrow Jerusalem.

- We will look at his ministry which brings the church right up to the time of the exile and we will see what God's message is to us.
- Let's jump right in, shall we?
  - What is the first thing we must learn from Jeremiah?

## I. Learn from Jeremiah that there are dreadful consequences for refusing to listen to God.

A. Faithful preachers must preach the message that God has given them.

1. In the opening chapter, God tells Jeremiah that He has ordained him to be a prophet.
  - a. He must preach all that God tells him to preach.
    - It was not for Jeremiah to take the parts of the message he liked best, or the parts he thought the people would like most, and avoid the offensive parts.
  - b. God tells him that he must preach some very hard truths—mostly negative things.
    - Look at Jeremiah 1:9-10: **Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. <sup>10</sup> See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant."**
    - You see that there are four negative and two positive consequences from his preaching... *root out, pull down, destroy, and throw down* are the negatives; *build and plant* are the positives.

- c. There were two parts to Jeremiah's hard message...
- He had to tell them that judgment was coming from Babylon.
  - He had to tell them why it was coming.
  - You can see how both of these are mentioned in the first chapter.
- 1) The judgment coming from Babylon is described as a boiling pot poured on them...
    - Look at Jeremiah 1:14-15: **Then the LORD said to me: "Out of the north calamity shall break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. For behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north," says the LORD; "they shall come and each one set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around, and against all the cities of Judah."**
    - Throughout the book, Jeremiah tells them that Babylon is going to come and wipe them out.
  - 2) And in verse 16, He explains why He is going to do this dreadful thing.
    - Jeremiah 1:16: **I will utter My judgments against them concerning all their wickedness, because they have forsaken Me, burned incense to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.**
  - 3) Repeatedly, Jeremiah tells them that this judgment is coming because of their refusal to listen to God.
    - He says words similar to what he says in Jeremiah 7:13-15: **"And now, because you have done all these works," says the LORD, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer, therefore I will do to the 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. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren—the whole posterity of Ephraim."**
    - Listen to all these verses:
      - Jer 11:7 **"For I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, 'Obey My voice.' "**
      - Jer 25:3 **"From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened."**
      - Jer 29:19 **"because they have not heeded My words, says the LORD, which I sent to them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; neither would you heed," says the LORD.**
      - Jer 32:33 **"And they have turned to Me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not listened to receive instruction."**
      - Jer 35:15 **"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.”**

- **Jer 44:4 “However I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, ‘Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!’ ”**

2. God is still sending preachers today. This is how He speaks to us.
    - a. We are told in Ephesians that when Jesus ascended, He sent apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers to ministers to His people.
      - He still rises up early to send them.
      - Indeed, the apostles and prophets have brought us His full revelation which is found in the Bible...
        - And they themselves established guidelines for recognising those that God has called to preach the word that is contained in the scriptures.
    - b. God is still sending preachers today, but how do you know which ones He has sent?
      - They are properly identified not by how popular they are, but by whether they preach all that is in the Bible.
      - If they pick bits and pieces that they like and leave out major portions, God has not sent them.
        - They are imposters speaking their own words and not God’s words.
    - c. God says that those who do not hear His word will perish.
      - Jesus said that those who do not hear and do what He says will be like a house on the sand that will fall.
      - He said that they would be cast into the place of outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
      - He said that the wrath of God would remain on them.
- B. You can’t say (or think) when God warns of judgment, “God would never do that.”
- Yet, that is what the people in Jeremiah’s day said and that is what people in our day say.
1. And the thing is, the false message was much more pleasant—to say that God loves His people so much that He would never let Babylon wipe them out.
    - a. He told David that he would have a son on his throne forever.
      - They had strong memories of how God had stopped the Assyrians when they got to Jerusalem.
        - Surely He would do that when Babylon or anyone else came.
      - God would never let them destroy His temple...
    - b. Yet, in Jeremiah 7:4, the LORD addresses this as a false hope: **4 “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.’ ”**
      - People today would speak of God’s grace and of His unfailing love, and of how Jesus said He would never leave us or forsake us, and that the gates of Hades will not prevail against His church,
        - but they apply these promises in the wrong way.

- c. Those promises were all true of the remnant, but they were used falsely of the visible church—that God would not let it be wiped out!
  - There will be a remnant that is saved—but almost the whole church can be wiped out.
  - Before the first century was out, Jesus sent warnings to the churches that if they did not repent, He would remove their lampstand.
    - He said that to the churches in Asia minor, like the great church at Ephesus—and then He *did* remove their lampstand.
  - Where are the great churches of North Africa and Turkey?
    - God sent Mohammed against them to wipe them out because of their idolatry.
  - And what has happened to the churches in the west—here in our own continent and in Spain and France and England?
    - They are in gross decline because they have rejected God’s Word—they have not listened to His prophets.
- 2. Instead of listening to Jeremiah, the people listened to false prophets who told them that all would be well.
  - a. Of these prophets the LORD says, in Jer 23:16-17: **“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. <sup>17</sup> They continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The LORD has said, “You shall have peace” ’; and to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, ‘No evil shall come upon you.’ ”**
  - b. It is always easy to hear those who tell you what you want to hear,
    - but the LORD tells you not to listen to them.
    - What you need is those who will tell you what the scriptures say.
    - We do not need to hear soft words that lull our consciences to sleep.
      - We need to hear from our holy God.
      - If He proclaims judgment, we need to hear of it!
        - Only then will we see our need of Christ and truly come to Him for life.
        - Only then will we love the LORD and start to follow Him in gratitude.
- 3. But what did the people do to Jeremiah when he preached the truth?
  - a. They ignored him and did not believe.
    - For example, when Jeremiah delivered a scroll with his prophecies on it to King Jehoiakim of Judah, we are told what happened in Jer. 36:22-24:
      - **22 Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month, with a fire burning on the hearth before him. <sup>23</sup> And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe’s knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. <sup>24</sup> Yet they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments, the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words.**

- He did not like Jeremiah's message—which was God's word, so he just rejected it.
  - And the people as a whole followed him.
  - The very thing that the LORD was rebuking them for—not hearing His word—they continued to do, showing that they were ripe for judgment.
- b. Their rejection of the Jeremiah's words is hard to believe when his prophecies are the ones that always come true.
  - He said Babylon would attack Jerusalem and enter it while false prophets say God will not let this happen...
    - It happens—Babylon carries off leaders and vessels from the temple.
  - But instead of listening to Jeremiah, they listen to Hananiah who got it wrong—but now he is telling them it will only last two years: Jer 28:3: **“Within two full years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD’S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon.”**
    - Jeremiah says that Hananiah will die for his lies before the year is out and he does...
      - Jere 28:15-17: **Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, “Hear now, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie. <sup>16</sup> Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the LORD.’ ” <sup>17</sup> So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.**
        - Now surely the people will believe Jeremiah, but they do not!
          - Unbelief is not rational at all—the problem is not evidence—it is hardness of heart.
    - Jeremiah tells King Zedekiah to submit to Babylon lest he be carried off.
      - The king refuses to listen and is caught as he tries to flee. His sons are killed and abused and then his eyes are put out.
    - In chapter 42, the people who are left at Jerusalem actually come to Jeremiah ask him to tell them what God would have them to do.
      - They promise that they will obey! Finally, right?
    - God is very gracious and reveals to Jeremiah that if they remain in the land, they will be blessed...
      - Look at Jere 42:10: **“If you will still remain in this land, then I will build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up. For I relent concerning the disaster that I have brought upon you.”... v. 13: But if you say, ‘We will not dwell in this land,’ disobeying the voice of the LORD your God, <sup>14</sup> saying, ‘No, but we will go to the land of Egypt where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor be hungry for bread, and there we will dwell’ —... v 16: ‘then it shall be that the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; the famine of which you were afraid shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there you shall die.’**
        - So what do they do? They promptly go to Egypt!!!
          - Unbelief is unbelievable!

TRANS> My brothers and sisters, I join with Jeremiah in pleading with you to hear the voice of the LORD.

- It will not go well with you at all if you make up your faith in your own heart.
  - Hear the whole counsel of God, not just what you want to hear.
  - You may prefer to hear only the message of peace, but that it is a false peace if judgment is not also preached.
    - Truth does not become truth because you wish it into being.
    - Truth is what God says, not what you want to be true.
- But here is the irony...
  - If you receive the truth that God speaks—if you believe His words—then you will find that what is true is way better than what you wanted to be true.
- That is the second great truth I want you to see in Jeremiah!

## **II. Learn that amidst all the judgment, there is unfathomable grace!**

A. Even though God crushes the church, there is always a remnant—a people that He preserves for Himself!

1. All the way through the Bible, this is always the case.
  - Yes, the whole church went into exile because of their wickedness in the day of Jeremiah...
    - but there were people like Jeremiah, and Baruch, his scribe, and the Ethiopian we meet who delivers Jeremiah from the pit...
  - And we know that there were people like Daniel and his three friends in Babylon.
    - Yes, the temple was destroyed, yes Jerusalem fell, yes, the sons of David were taken off the throne... because of the sin of the church as a whole.
    - But there were still believers and God's promises to preserve them—not in outward form—but as His people—were stronger than ever!
  - It was the same way when Jesus came.
    - As a whole, the church of His day rejected Him and the leaders delivered Him up to be crucified...
      - But there were Peter and James and John and later Paul and Timothy and many others who followed Him and listened to His Word.
      - The church fell to ruin, but through this remnant, it continued.
  - In the later history of the church, you had the Arian heresy—they were the people who followed Arius who said that Jesus was not truly God...
    - They seemed to be everywhere, but God still had His people and they came forth.
    - Then with Islam... God raised it up to punish His people for all their idolatry—for their worship of saints and such—but there was still a remnant that God preserved.
  - Then there was the great apostasy with the papacy—trying to get people to look to priests for salvation...
    - but here again, God had a remnant that continued to follow His Word, were driven away by the papists, but continued to follow the truth of God.

- And today—there is so much corruption in the church—there is the acceptance of sexual perversity, there is the rejection of the doctrine of judgment and hell and the wrath of God... as I already spoke about...
  - But God still has a people who continue in His truth and He will always have them and though the form of the church may perish, they will continue to worship Him in spirit and in truth.
- B. Jeremiah shows us the sure promises that God has for those who believe, even in the face of the church as a whole being judged.
1. First, the LORD tells them that He will make a new covenant with them.
    - Turn to Jer. 31:31 and you can see the promise the LORD makes to His people:
      - **Jer 31:31-34: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—  
32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.  
33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**
    - a. This promise was made when God was getting ready to destroy them!
      - He is still going to do the things that He has always done for His people.
        - He is going to give them a heart that *will* listen to Him—they will have His law in their hearts...
        - He is going to be their God and make them His people...
        - And He is going to forgive their sins.
      - There is going to be a great restoration so that they all know Him.
        - That is what happened with the exile—
          - that after it was over, the church was purified so that instead of the majority being unbelievers, they all knew the LORD.
      - And this was even more the case when Jesus came and God established the new covenant with His people.
        - With the new covenant, there was a clear division made between those that received Christ and those that did not.
          - Hebrews has a lot to say about this—
            - There was a change in the priesthood—now Christ was the priest and the sacrifice for sin.
            - There was a change in the Sabbath day from the seventh to the first day of the week.
            - There was a change in the signs of the covenant with baptism and the Lord’s Supper replacing circumcision and all the rituals of the old covenant.

- And these changes resulted in a great division between those who listened to God and followed Christ and those who refused to listen.
  - And this outward division served to clearly mark out those who really were God’s people—who had a heart with His law in it and who had forgiveness of sin through faith in Christ... and those who did not.
    - The people who embraced Christ were separated from the people who did not—and instead of having a church with mostly unbelievers as it was when Israel came out of Egypt,
      - Now you had a church made up of mostly true believers.
      - Not every single one of them, but generally the church believed.
- b. And you see, God is promising this refining process... when He brings His church back from exile...
  - It is going to be a church made up mostly of people who truly are His people... not just in name, but in reality: “They will all know Me.”
    - God, by the exile, is not destroying His church, but purifying it and refining it.
      - He is cutting out the cancer—those that do not believe.
  - This does not mean that the church was purified so that in the New Testament there would never be among the people those who do not know the Lord.
    - Jesus and His apostles both speak of a great falling away—and so it has been through the centuries as we have already mentioned.
    - But when Jesus came, there was initially a purified church where it was the case that they all knew the LORD...

TRANS> So the message of Jeremiah is that the destruction of the city and the temple and the throne of David will only lead to a purified church where all will know the Lord.

- And now let’s look at the second thing that Jeremiah speaks of that is very much connected with this promise of a purified church.
2. Second, He tells them that a branch of righteousness will still come from them.
- a. Even though the LORD is casting them out, He is still going to bring forth a righteous Son through them.
    - His promise about that is still intact—it has not changed!
  - b. I mentioned before that Jesus Christ is the priest who replaces the entire Old Testament Priesthood with its sacrifices and ceremonies.
    - Indeed He is the branch that brings true righteousness to God’s people.
    - Look at Jeremiah 33:14-18: **“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah: <sup>15</sup> in those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.”**
      - By a branch to David, He means the Son of David... a descendant of David to sit on his throne forever, establishing a righteous kingdom.
      - My brothers and sisters, He is the one who actually brings righteousness to us—righteousness that we do not have and could not have without Him!



- The passage continues... Jeremiah 33:16: **In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**
    - He Himself is Yahweh our Righteousness—and He is born to us so that we are righteous in Him—we are planted in Him as the branch of David—we are His righteous kingdom.
  - Verse 17 continues: **“For thus says the LORD: ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; <sup>18</sup> nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.’ ”**
    - You see from this that David’s Son (Christ) is both a king to govern us and represent us in righteousness before God...
      - and a priest to make the sacrifice for us so that He interceded for all of our sins.
- c. Yes, there was this judgment against Judah by Babylon...
- But God’s commitment to save His elect people was the same as ever—you might even say it was even more sure than ever!
    - God was assuring them that He was moving forward with His plans to bring forth this Son of Righteousness to save them and the nations!
    - His grace was with them, and they could trust Him as they went to Babylon.
- So even though Babylon destroys the city, the temple, and David’s throne, we have seen that God still promises that He will establish a new covenant and that He will send the Son of promise who is the righteous branch.
3. Third, He promises that Babylon will herself be wiped out and so will not hold them in bondage forever.
- All along in Jeremiah, it is mentioned that Babylon is just a tool in God’s hands that He uses to chasten His church—and to purge out the unbelief.
    - Just as Isaiah said, God is in control of Babylon and will destroy her when He is finished with her.
- a. Jeremiah foretells what will happen to each nation around Judah.
- There is a kind of appendix at the end of Jeremiah—in chapters 46-51, where Jeremiah’s prophecies about what is to become of each nation are recorded.
    - And among these is His prophecy about Babylon.
- b. In chapter 50, the LORD explains that He has used Babylon, but that now He is going to punish her because she was glad when His heritage was destroyed.
- There is a nice summary in Jeremiah 50, verse 17-20: **“Israel is like scattered sheep; the lions have driven *him* away. First the king of Assyria devoured him; now at last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken his bones.” <sup>18</sup> Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. <sup>19</sup> But I will bring back Israel to his home, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan; his soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead. <sup>20</sup> In those days and in that time,” says the LORD, “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but *there shall be none*; and the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I preserve.”**

- c. Today, God is using wicked nations and rulers to chasten us as His people for our unfaithfulness...
    - But the day is coming and is already appointed when God will judge all of these wicked nations—the Babylon of this world.
    - What you need to see is that ultimately, God is going to destroy our enemies.
      - He raises them up, He uses them to refine us,
        - but the day is coming when He will destroy them and we will be blessed forever with our LORD.
- C. Learn from Jeremiah the great love that the LORD has for us!
1. The LORD makes it clear that the judgment of the church is only temporary—for her betterment.
    - In Jeremiah 29:10-12, He says to us: **“For thus says the LORD: ‘After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. <sup>11</sup> For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.’ ”**
    - He is so earnest about making sure that we know that He is still committed to His church!
  2. But be sure you understand that although the church’s judgments are not eternal...
    - those in the church who reject His call will have eternal judgment.
    - Those who are cut off when God punishes His church and who do not return to Him are lost forever and will perish in the Lake of Fire.
      - So these judgments are very serious and call for us to join our LORD in pleading with the rebellious to repent.
  3. But even here, we see the mercy of God in the pleading of His prophet, Jeremiah.
    - Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet—
      - How earnestly and relentlessly he pleads with the people to repent so they will not come into judgment...he is an example of God rising up early to plead with His people.
    - Jeremiah reflects the heart of God for us, His people.
      - In Jeremiah, we see the love of our heavenly father who sent him, continuing to send prophets and ministers of the word to plead with us again and again.
      - How hard our hearts must be to resist such tender calls.
    - See that you do not resist!
      - The offer of the gospel is free... come and find life in Christ... here is the righteous branch of the LORD... with righteousness and forgiveness for all who come.
      - Ruin comes if you harden your heart—salvation comes if you believe.